

A black and white photograph of a man in a suit, looking down. A woman's hand is covering his mouth. The image is dark and moody.

MY
BILLIONAIRE
BOSS is a
Vampire

KATE MCDARRIS

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*This book has been previously published in its entirety as **My Billionaire Boss is a Vampire** Episodes 1-30 on Kindle Vella.*

Cover design by Kate McDarris

Before You Read

*THIS BOOK HAS BEEN PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED in its entirety as **My Billionaire Boss is a Vampire Episodes 1-30** on Kindle Vella.*

What you are about to read is a dark fantasy romance intended exclusively for mature audiences aged eighteen years and over.

Please expect to read explicit and graphic depictions of sex, violence, and language.

The sexual encounters within this book occur between consenting magical creatures. This is meant to be enjoyed purely as a work of fiction and nothing in this book should be attempted in real life by actual humans.

Do not invite a vampire into your home, and if a demon comes at you wagging its tail and grinning, take this author's advice and *run*.

Please see list in the back of this book for specific content.

*For all the smut lovers.
Never apologize for what you enjoy.*

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ONE

Preheating To 500 Degrees

ALICE

STERIC CRAWFORD IS worth \$42 billion.

Chiseled jaw.

Aquiline nose.

Hair the color of fresh kohl.

Eyes so dark and intense, I'm pretty sure he can read my soul sometimes.

God, I hope not. The things I fantasize about doing to my boss on that sleek black executive desk of his would definitely not get a pass from the HR department.

He's totally built under that ridiculous tailored suit. I can tell by the way the buttons strain to stay intact on his white shirt. Like, any second they're going to just pop off with one flex of his enormous pec—

“Alice?” He's staring at me. Dark eyebrows raise. “The invoices?”

“Right.” I clear my throat and go to the shelves where we keep the books. “What dates again?”

“September and October.” He leans back in his gigantic chair. The frame protests under his rock solid form.

I take a deep breath and scan the shelves, but my eyes threaten to glaze over. It's been a long day and it's late.

Or early?

I hardly ever see the sun anymore. Steric does a lot of business with companies on the opposite side of the globe, so we keep odd hours.

I locate the books high up on the top shelf.

Shit. I stretch all the way. Even in my ridiculous stilettos I can't reach.

I scrunch my nose and tilt to the tips of my toes, *almost there...*

Somehow I snag the edge of the heavy bound book and edge it out, but it slips and I teeter.

He's there in the blink of an eye, grasping the book in his enormous hand before it nails me right in the face.

How the fuck... I bite back my thoughts before they make it out of my mouth.

"Careful." His voice is a low rumble, right in my ear. He smells incredible. A mix of fresh steel and a tinge of smoky sweetness, like aged whiskey barrels, and maybe leather?

His eyes are trained on me with a stare that I can feel caressing my neck like a physical touch. The one that turns me on like a fucking oven.

Preheating set to 500 degrees.

"Are you all right?" Steric towers over me. Even in my heels. And he's not moving.

He dips his head and his nostrils flare. I can tell because his face is only centimeters from mine. So close, I could easily catch a taste.

The corner of his mouth quirks up. Barely. A spark lights in his eyes.

I swallow past the knot of desire rising in my throat.

He can't possibly know what I'm thinking. Unless I'm that obvious?

Oh, shit. Am I that obvious?

He lowers the book the rest of the way down and his thick, perfectly manicured fingers brush along the back of my arm.

His hands are just as big as the rest of him. And you know what they say about big hands.

Holy hell. I need to get out of here before I do something stupid and get my ass fired. I'm coming up on my one year review, and the truth is I love this job and I'm great at it. The last thing I want to do is screw it up by drooling on my boss' power tie.

Or, worse.

"Will that be all for today, sir?" I turn and hope he can't see the peaks of my traitorous nipples straining to break free of my lacy bra.

He flicks his eyes down to my chest for the barest second, but it's long enough to send a streak of lightning straight through my body.

"Mm. Thank you." His response vibrates straight from my ears down to my clit. It makes my body sizzle like honey drizzled over a lit cigar. The tiny nub pulses between the crux of my thighs and my lace thong threatens to spontaneously combust.

He opens the book and flips through the carefully cataloged pages. Steric's not one to trust technology. He likes things old school.

"See you tomorrow, then." I keep my thighs clenched and hope there's not a damp spot on the back of my pencil skirt. This is why I usually wear black. Harder to tell.

He glances back up. "Tomorrow?"

"It's my night off." I do a quick run through of his schedule in my head. "You have the Rossini gala tonight. Tom is picking you up at seven."

His eyes slip shut and he winces. "Of course."

"You're not looking forward to it?" I try to keep the lilt out of my voice, but I'm hoping for even the slightest detail.

It's the most exclusive soiree in the city. Only the most wealthy and elite are selected to attend, and it's impossible to get an invite.

It's a charity ball to raise money for some rare type of blood cancer, but it's so swank none of the attendees ever talk about what actually happens. All of the caterers and employees of the museum are bound by a solid NDA. Which of course makes it even more interesting.

"Honestly, it's quite dull." Steric sighs. "I'd much rather stare at these books all night with y—"

I bite my lip and hold my breath waiting for the slip, but he stops and his eyes drift down to my mouth. I dart my tongue out and wet my mouth before I can stop myself.

His eyes flash from black to a gleaming silver, but it's so quick I must have imagined it. Did I mention it's been a long night?

"You should go." Steric's voice takes on a ragged edge. My belly softens and my thighs twitch. "Now. Enjoy your day, Alice."

I swallow the tightness in my throat. My heart stutters and I'm not even sure what I say as I rush out.

In my own office I take a second to fan myself with some files from my desk. The crease of my cleavage is damp. I really need to chill the fuck out.

I tuck the files away, double check the schedule for tonight and grab my purse. The elevator is sleek and quiet as it carries me down to the parking garage of our building. My sharp heels echo in the cavernous space of polished concrete.

It's not quite dawn yet. The sky is still dark, but the soft promise of a fresh day hovers in the cool, damp air. My heated skin chills and goosebumps prickle my arms.

My spot is easy to find. Since Steric has Tom to drive him everywhere, he doesn't need a place to park. As his executive assistant, I get the most coveted spot in the garage with my name on it, right next to the door.

Parked there is Joyce, my pride and joy. A flaming red, solid-axle Corvette convertible. My signing bonus. Never let it be said Steric doesn't take care of me as well as I take care of him.

As soon as my fingers thread through the door handle, a hand covers my mouth and I'm grabbed from behind.

What the fuck?

"Not a sound, princess." A low voice growls in my ear. "This won't hurt a bit."

Like hell it won't. Instinct kicks in.

I jam my elbow back.

The voice grunts, dusting my hair with a quick exhalation. Arms fall loose around me.

He grabs my leg on the way down, knocking my knee out.

I plunge forward to keep balance, but in my tight skirt I don't make it far and my heel lands on his chest.

And keeps going.

I scrunch my eyes shut. There's a fizzing sound. My shoe is stuck in a corpse, like one of those flesh melting zombie things dissolving right in front of my eyes.

Someone screams.

The sound reverberates along the cavernous parking garage, up and down, gathering strength as it keeps going.

It's me. I'm screaming and I can't stop.

TWO

Staked By A Stiletto

STERIC

THE MOMENT ALICE is out the door, I sink my face down to the books. Her scent is still on them. A heady combination of honeysuckle and desire. The essence that makes her none other than Alice Monroe.

It's getting more and more difficult to ignore her thoughts. Usually, I'm able to shield myself from the endless drone of the minds around me. The quiet drumming of heartbeats throughout the building.

But as dawn approaches I get weaker. My control slips.

When it's just the two of us left, it's nearly impossible not to hone in and hear how horny she is for me.

Impossible not to smell the scent of eager dampness gathering between her smooth, heated thighs. I need to be more careful.

I can't risk her discovering what I am. I can't expose her to my world. The one filled with monsters and blood. I can't risk losing her.

Her scream rips through my ears, ragged and long.

I'm out the door in a blur.

Down 50 flights in half a second. The ability to fly does have its advantages. The door to the parking garage twists on its hinges as I explode through.

"Alice?" Her car is there, but I don't see her. "Alice!"

I hold still. Close my eyes. Listen.

A quiet keening sound echoes across the bald concrete floor. I step slowly around the side of the vibrant red car and discover Alice on the ground, back pressed against the driver's side door.

One of her shoes is off, standing right in the center of a pile of singed ash. It's in the perfect outline of a body. I recognize the sign immediately.

Staked vampire.

With the heel of her shoe. Pride fills my chest. I didn't think I could feel anything anymore. It's been so long since my heart last beat.

"Alice." I keep my voice low, soothing.

"I didn't—I just—" She's gasping for air. Shaking. Eyes wide and staring at her shoe. "What the fuck!"

I kneel beside her slowly, palms up. "Alice, look at me."

Her breath comes in short hissing pants. Full lips parted. She blinks rapidly.

"Look at me," I command.

She finally tears her gaze away from the ashen mess in front of her and sees me. Her thoughts are a jumble. A radio gone on the fritz. No clear signal.

"I'm here," I tell her, adding a bit of compulsion to my tone. Just a little to snap her out of her panic. "You're safe now."

"I just—" Her lower lip juts out and begins to tremble. Wide tumultuous gray eyes well up. "And he just—"

"I know." I grab her shoe and slide it back on her foot. Her leg is encased in silk stockings. I can't resist tracing the seam up from her heel across the gentle swell of her tight calf. "You did the right thing."

"I did?" Her voice wavers. A tear escapes and dashes across her cheek. Splitting my empty chest like a streak of lightning.

Please, no. Anything but that.

“You are so brave. So strong.” I thumb away her tear and she nods. Gulping back a sob. “It’s over. Can you put your arms around my neck?”

She sniffles and circles her hands around my collar. Delicate fingertips brush the back of my neck. Thread up lightly into my hair.

Her thoughts become less frenetic.

So soft. She thinks. Always wanted to...

I jam up my shields and block off the rest. It won’t help either of us now for me to listen further. I lift her from the cold, hard floor and carry her around the car. I lower her down onto the passenger seat and she rests her head back against the leather.

Her breath is still light, but slower now. She exhales along my cheek. I turn my face, her lush mouth only centimeters from mine. It would be so easy.

I can’t. For so many reasons.

Instead, I straighten and return to the other side of the car. I step over to the outline and smudge the ashes until there’s nothing but a dark dusty smear.

I bend over to retrieve the keys and her purse from where they lay strewn just under the car, and slide into the driver’s seat.

A slight frown of confusion flutters across Alice’s features. “You know how to drive?”

“Hm.” I trace my hands across the sleek steering wheel. Lick my lips with delight as the engine rumbles to life. “Do I know how to drive.”

I throw the car into gear and hit reverse, zipping out of the space. The tires screech across the slick pavement. I feel out the gear shift and the next second we’re zooming out into the darkness before dawn.

THREE

Will You Come In?

ALICE

STERIC CRAWFORD IS STANDING in my doorway. His dark hair almost reaches the top. Another inch or two and he'd have to duck to get in.

Shit.

I'm used to seeing him at the office where everything is massive anyway. And now with my heels kicked off, I feel extra small standing there in front of him.

The light from the hallway of my condo comes in, but I haven't flipped any switches inside yet. The bank of windows in my living room overlooks the marina. Lights from the walkway shine in, casting a dim glow around my loft. He's just standing there, like a giant shadow taking up the whole door.

I don't know what to say, or do. But, it's getting kind of awkward now.

"Do you... want to come in?" I blurt out.

His arms remain crossed over that thick, wide chest. "Is that an invitation?"

I remember the way that mugger tumbled to the ground. How I meant to just kick him, but my heel sank into his chest and then he fucking vanished into a pile of ash.

I can taste my heartbeat on my tongue. How is that even a thing?

My boss remains there, waiting for me to answer.

“It’s now or never, Alice. The sun is rising.” He says in that low, smooth voice. My insides ignite. “Say the word and I’ll leave. Things will continue exactly how they have been. We don’t have to mention this ever happened. Tell me to leave, and I’ll go.”

I flinch. I can’t stop staring at him. The moment swells up inside me, too big to contain. I know what he’s telling me. Somehow I’ve always known. I just didn’t ever allow myself to imagine I was right.

My billionaire boss is a vampire.

“Is that what you want?” I ask him. There’s hardly any air left in my lungs to put behind the words.

He dips his chin, but lifts his eyes. Zeroing in on me.

“It’s not my choice to make.” He pins me under that impossible gaze. “I need your permission to stay. If that’s what you want.”

I scoff and hot fresh tears burn my eyes. *What I want?* Of course it’s what I fucking want. And now that the chance is here, the word is hanging on the tip of my tongue, but I can’t spit it out.

He’s my boss, for fucks’ sake. There are rules. I’m more than a cliché. There are about a million reasons I should say no.

He nods slowly, as if he’s reading my thoughts. *Wait, is he reading my thoughts?*

He turns to go.

WAIT!

He stops, half turned in the doorway.

The light hits his profile and he’s elegant and noble and I have so many questions. Who *is* this man I thought I knew? I can recite his bank account number. His shoe size. His dry cleaning budget. I know his schedule to a fucking T.

But I suddenly want so much more. Not just his body, but everything.

“Stay,” the word bursts out of me before I can overthink it any more. “I want you to stay.”

“You know what that means?” He keeps his eyes on the doorway. “If I stay, I’m here until sunset. I can’t leave. You haven’t seen who I truly am. You don’t know what I’m capable of. If I stay, Alice, I don’t know what I might do to you.”

And hot damn, if I don’t want to find out.

“I understand.” I nod. “Okay.”

Then he turns to me. I’m struck by the intensity of his gaze. It’s dead serious, and it hollows out my stomach. “Okay, what?”

I take a long, slow breath. Swallow hard. My heart stutters in my chest, but I’ve suddenly never been more certain of anything in my life.

I lift my chin, look my boss straight in his eyes and say, “Please, Steric. Will you come in?”

FOUR

I Cannot Be Gentle

STERIC

THE METAPHYSICAL BARRIER pushing against my body drops. In a flash, I cross the room and Alice is in my arms. She gasps as I shove her up against the plain square column in the center of the open loft space.

Her cheeks are flushed. Her blood thrums in her veins, painting her skin with an appetizing blush. The rush of it fills my ears. Makes my mouth water.

She makes a small sound, but her eyes are fierce. Determined. A feral growl rises up, scraping the back of my throat. Her tongue darts out across her lower lip.

“Alice.” I breathe in her sweet, musky scent. I grip the edge of the column, certain the strength of my need could crush the concrete into dust. “I don’t think I can be gentle.”

“Good.” She grips my face and yanks me down to her mouth.

My vision blurs and I shut my eyes against the pure ecstasy of her taste. She’s everything I imagined and more. Soft, eager, wanton. I open my mouth and her tongue rakes inside.

She’s petite but powerful. She meets the strength of my kiss, and demands more. We delve into each other’s mouths, exploring, battling for purchase. I tear away, and her chest heaves for air. Her blouse is open at the top and her rounded breasts rise and fall with each gasp.

My teeth ache. I’m desperate to taste her. Consume her.

I wrap my fist around her slender neck. Her pulse races against my palm. I press her against the column, holding her steady while I bury my face into the silk curtain of her flaxen hair.

All in good time, I remind myself.

Everything inside her body and mind screams for more. I can hear her thoughts, her silent pleas. She clenches her thighs, yearning for relief. I hear every single thing she wants me to do to her. Months of pent up lust, raging to be sated.

I trace my thumb down the center of her neck, along the ridge of her throat, dipping down into the pool of her clavicle where her pulse jumps.

“Tell me what you want, Alice.” My lips dust hers. She lifts her chin, trying to take a kiss, but I hold back, just out of reach.

She emits a whimper. It drives me mad. “Don’t you know what I’m thinking?”

“Yes. I know every single filthy thought you’ve had about me.” I weigh her under my heavy gaze. She quails, and her knees weaken, but I tighten my grip at her throat. “And now I want to hear them out loud. You’re a strong woman, Alice. It’s what I admire about you. You have no qualms about asking for exactly what you want, and enjoying it when you get it. Yet, you’ve always held back when it came to me. Why?”

“You’re my boss.” Her throat works along my palm. “What I want from you is completely inappropriate.”

“I suppose it does present quite a conundrum, doesn’t it?” I allow a smile to curve my lips. “So. You’re fired.”

Her smooth jaw drops open. “But, no! That’s not—”

Her mind is racing now, wondering how she got here. Frightened that she’ll lose everything.

“Be still, Alice.” I press my lips to the edge of her hairline. “Shh. I won’t ‘drop you like a hot potato.’ I swear it.”

“You won’t?” She gazes up at me, eyes filled with hope and trust. It’s enough to turn my insides out. Of all the wicked

things I've done in my extended life, I never imagined I would ever deserve to have this.

"No." I reach down and smooth my hand over the curve of her ass, down to the hem of her tight skirt, that hugs her thighs so well. "Because you drive me positively mad. The truth is, I've been just as frightened as you have. My world is very different from yours. Dangerous. Seductive. I've kept you apart from it, protected you because I wanted you all to myself. Wanted you safe. But tonight, you held your own. You proved your worth. I heard your screams and I knew for certain that I absolutely cannot continue my existence without you."

A moan crawls up and out of her from somewhere deep inside. I catch it on my tongue and devour her mouth again. "I don't want to pay you to keep track of my files and pick up my fucking dry cleaning anymore. I want so much more from you."

"Yes." Her forehead creases with the pang of her desire. "Please. Yes."

I lift the hem of her skirt and the fabric whispers up her thighs, revealing the lacy top of her stockings and the garters attached to them. I trace my finger down the silk ribbons.

"I know you wear this for me." I tease her tender neck with a fleeting kiss. "You like how it makes you feel good and sexy, and believe me I took notice."

Her eyes drift shut and her body loosens.

"You do it all for me, Alice." I trace my nose along the edge of her hairline, pulling in her essence. I gently curl the hair away from the delicate shell of her ear and whisper, "I see you. I want you. All of you."

I guide her thigh up and hook her knee over my hip. Her skirt is pushed up around her waist and her tender center unfolds before me, dusky and swollen around the edge of her thin lace thong.

I kneel before her, letting her leg curve over my shoulder and drape down the length of my back. I lift my face to her

and she gazes down at me in wonder.

“Take me.” Her heart thunders in my ears. The strength of her desire overwhelms my senses. “I’m all yours.”

With a raw groan, my incisors lengthen and I claim her.

FIVE

Espresso

ALICE

STERIC PRESSES his face into my inner thigh. There's a heavy pressure. A sharp prick.

Pure bliss.

My heart flutters. I can't catch my breath.

It's like that moment in an orgasm between falling over the edge and slamming into the waves. Only, I just keep falling, and falling. Soaring into sweet, light ecstasy.

"Fuck!" My shout echoes off the high open ceiling. I grit my teeth and grab the column behind me to keep myself upright. The pressure is hard enough to bruise and all I can think about is how I don't want it to stop.

My eyes flicker shut. I float, loose and heavy.

Then I'm in his arms. The soft mattress of my bed is under my back. It rocks beneath me like the deck of a ship.

"Alice?" He's breathing heavily. The tang of copper rests heavy on his breath. "Open your eyes."

I try to obey, but my eyelids are lead.

"Open your eyes." His voice takes on a tone that yanks something deep inside me. My eyes fly open without me even trying. His face hovers above mine. God, he's gorgeous. Even more so with his perfect hair mussed from my hands.

"Good girl." He presses his palm to the center of my chest. My heart beat skips along before evening out to a more regular

rhythm again. His shoulders lower from around his ears.

Even in the dim light, I can see fresh color in his cheeks and lips. As if he could even look any more incredible, he manages it. That's me inside him. My blood, giving him fresh life.

It makes me feel so good. So powerful. I fucking did that. I grin up at him. "God, am I drunk? I feel drunk."

"The effects of my bite." He presses a kiss over my heart. "Enjoy it. Do you have shades for your windows?"

"Over there." My arm is too heavy to lift. I haven't felt like this since... ever. Not even that spring break in Cabo. I sigh and float.

Whatever this is. I want more.

The electric hum of the blackout shades fills the room. I usually don't use them, but it helps keep the heat out in the hottest parts of the summer. Here on the water it mostly stays cool and there's always a breeze.

I'm glad I have them tonight. Today. Whatever. Fuck.

With the shades lowered, we're in total darkness. I can't see anything even with my eyes open. Usually, when I'm alone, I find it peaceful. With Steric here, it's thrilling.

The bed dips beside me. His weight is there along my side.

I curl into the endless length of him. His shirt is gone.

"How is this my life?" I trace the outline of his impeccable pecs. The labyrinth trail of his rock solid abs. "Tell me this is real. It's not another wet dream."

"Do you dream of me often?" His rich deep voice envelops me, cutting through to my center. I'm already drenched and I gush even more.

"All the time." Normally, I wouldn't admit it, but this thrall he has me in has me loose all over. That connection vanishes between my inside voice and my outside voice.

But what does it matter? He can hear my thoughts anyway. Apparently.

Oh, hell.

“Tell me what you do to yourself when you dream of me.” His soft touch brushes through my hair, sending tingles all down my spine, out into the tips of my toes.

“I reach between my legs and rub my clit.” My face warms with the truth, but somehow I can’t lie to him. Even if I wanted to. That strange magical pull yanks the words out of my mouth. “Then I slip my fingers inside and wish they were yours.”

“Mm.” He groans in my ear.

There’s a sharp tug against my thigh. The lace of my thong snaps. He yanks the small bit of fabric free like it’s nothing, and draws the string along my crack, drenching it in my wetness. His hand travels up and he inhales, long and deep. His chest expands against my arm. Nipple hardens into a pebble and turns my skin to goosebumps.

“This scent.” He sighs out a long moan. “I could smell you in the air every time you came into my office. Every day, I could very nearly taste you on the tip of my tongue.”

The thong lands with a light flop on the floor next to the bed.

His massive hand slides down my belly in between the crux of my thighs. I squeeze on reflex.

“Open your legs, Alice.” His voice is deep and commanding and it pumps even more heat to my center. I can feel how flushed and swollen I am when I part my thighs.

His thick fingers plunge down the center of my body. The tough pad of his middle finger circles my clit and I shudder, grabbing his roped shoulder and digging in my nails. He eases the pressure, tracing the line up and down my center, swirling the slickness over my carefully tended Brazilian wax.

I was never sure if this moment would come. I always wanted to be ready for him. Just in case.

“Perfect.” He murmurs against my cheek. “So perfect.”

I whimper and cling to his thick bicep while he uses his fingers to spread my body apart. To delve into my inner folds. My breasts fill and press against the lace of my bra, straining against my shirt, begging to be freed.

“No,” he rumbles. “I’m going to enjoy this part of you first.”

Oh, right. Mind reading.

He dips two fingers inside me, cupping my mound. I gasp. He smiles against my face. “Is it everything you imagined?”

“So much better.” I roll my hips, taking him in further until he’s actually fisting the hard crux of my mound. I bear my teeth and he’s filling me, and it’s so good, and *how can this just be his hand?*

He smashes his face against mine and I squeeze my thighs, adding extra pressure. “So. Fucking. Hot.”

He fucks me like that with his hand, adding another finger. My back arches up off the mattress.

“Alice.” He stills inside me. My body clenches. “What’s your safe word?”

“Jesus.” I moan behind gritted teeth.

“Jesus is your safe word?” I hear the smile in his voice, even though I can’t fucking see anything.

“No. Fuck.” I scrape my nails along his arm. Trying to remember my name. Trying to remember fucking anything. “Expresso. With an x.”

“Noted.” He leans in. “Are you going to take all of me?”

I inhale. “You want to fist me?”

“I want to know your limits. Do you even know what they are, Alice?” His voice is low and steady in the darkness. “Has anyone ever been brave enough to drive you as far as you can go?”

“No.” I bury my face against his neck. As far as sexual experiences went, mine had been pretty vanilla so far. “But I’ve never wanted anyone the way I want you.”

“I thought so.” He traces his tongue across my lip, sending vibrations of need through my whole body. “Let’s find out what your incredible body can do. Yes?”

“Yes.” I nod and raise my face. He kisses me long and slow. Moving his hand in the same, steady rhythm. I’m so wet, and only flood even more when the pressure builds as he eases in his fourth finger.

“Mm.” I try to press my lips together in concentration but he coaxes my jaw apart. Keeping my body from tightening up with the added pressure.

“Breathe.” He tells me. “Drape your knee across my hip, then push against my hand. Ready?”

“Yes.” I take a shaky breath and move my leg across his hip. He tilts his wrist and slips his thumb into place. I blow out my breath and push. Like magic, my body opens and his entire hand slides inside.

“Beautiful.” He presses his lips to my forehead. “Do you want me to stop?”

“No. Shit.” My whole body is shaking. Hanging on the edge of... something. “I didn’t know.”

Steric drops light kisses along my face while I cling to him and tremble. “Didn’t know what, my sweet girl.”

“That it could be like this.” I try to catch my breath, but I’m so full. So tight. So slick. I can hear the sound of myself as he eases out and back in. “I want. I want. Oh, *fuck*.”

“Tell me, Alice.” His voice rumbles against me. “Tell me what you want.”

“Make me come.” My eyes roll back into my head. “I need to fucking come. Oh, god!”

He eases me onto my back while I’m still impaled on his hand like some kind of fuckpuppet and then his other hand splays up beneath my blouse onto my bare belly. His span is so wide, he nearly covers my entire stomach.

But then he’s adding more pressure from the outside, and pushing up from the inside. And then I’m screaming and

writhing around him while he holds me steady and my body convulses.

I shatter into a million pieces.

Turn to fucking ether.

And he's there the whole time, waiting to put me back together.

All In Good Time

STERIC

“SPECTACULAR.”

I watch Alice’s face in the darkness with my preternatural vision. She’s the most beautiful creature when she comes. Giving up her whole self to the orgasm.

Her body clenches my hand, crushing in her strength. I caress her inner wall with the barest touches, bringing her to the brink again and again, allowing her to ride out the crest and fall of her pleasure until her shouts turn ragged and her body melts beneath me.

Then, I ease out of her slowly. She mewls in protest. It pains me to no longer be inside her, but her blood flows within me now, warming my body, making me feel more alive than I’ve felt in ages.

It wasn’t the dull taste of donated blood just to survive. Nor the sluggish muddled flavor of a live donor from a sport club. Certainly not the sour, adrenaline filled drink from an unsuspecting fool stumbling into a back alley at the wrong time.

Alice is... divine. Sweet and tempestuous. Spicy. Honeyed. Delicious.

I sigh.

Then, I pierce the pad of my thumb on my incisor. She’s going to be sore after this. No matter how strong she is, no matter how much she can take, she’s still mortal.

I trace my thumb over her lower lip. Her tongue darts out. She tugs my finger into her mouth and sucks the garnet drop from my flesh. She moans, and the sound travels through my body straight to my groin. The moment she began to writhe, to shout, it was all I could do to hold back.

I want to make her do that when my cock is inside her.

I want to fill every hole. Stuff her full of me and make her beg for more. I want to fuck her until my cum drips from her every crevice.

All in good time. If there's nothing else I've learned over the centuries, it's that there's never a need to rush. Alice is already mine. She proved that in spades.

Her body relaxes. The small taste of my blood does its job, and she eases into her rest.

I slip off the bed, find the bathroom, and splash warm water on my face. Usually the power of the sunrise lulls me into a deep slumber, but I can stay awake when I need to. Especially after a fresh drink.

I don't intend to sleep. Not this day.

The light from the cracked door spills out across Alice's form in the bed. She's wrecked and beautiful. More perfect than I ever could have dreamed.

I watch her for a long moment and then pull out my phone and text Dante, my second-in-command.

Alice was attacked in the parking garage this morning. Threat neutralized. Find out who it was.

I set the phone aside and strip off the rest of my clothes. My cock hangs low and semi-hard. Just thinking about Alice's moans makes it twitch.

My phone pings with Dante's reply. *On it.*

I put the device away and find a washcloth in the cabinet. I wet it with warm water and leave the bathroom light on, cracking the door.

I want Alice to be able to see me.

Her eyelids flutter and she stirs when I clean between her legs with the warm cloth.

“You have too many clothes on,” I tell her softly.

One eyelid cracks a sliver. “So take them off.”

I smile and draw my finger down the edge of her blouse. Unbuttoning one button at a time. Oh-so-slowly, waiting for her to squirm.

She finally does when I reach her sternum. Her belly flutters and her hips press into the bed. I smile at the effect I have on her. How many times have I watched her walk out of my office, wishing I could have a taste of these glorious thighs?

I reach the last button and fan the blouse open, bearing her body to me. Her skin is so smooth. Impeccable.

My cock responds.

Her chest rises and falls gently. The bulk of her breasts are pushed up into rounded globes by her lacy bra. I trace the thin fabric and feel her nipple respond.

I stretch out beside her toying with her breasts, tracing circles around her nipples through the fabric until they strain to be let loose. I lean up and lick the flat of my tongue over the lace. Alice lets out a light breath.

I peek up at her face. Her eyes are still shut, but her lips are turned up in a smile. Her pulse flicks in her neck. That glorious lifeline glows like a homing beacon. My mouth floods with saliva. Fuck, I want to taste her again. But it's too soon.

I didn't take much from her, but it was her first time.

The effects are stronger on someone who isn't used to it. Like a drug.

It's easy to get addicted to a vampire's bite. To always chase that high.

To die trying to find it.

“Alice, open your eyes.” I command her gently. She obeys. The dark center of her eyes pool black with arousal and the light narcotic effects of my blood. I fight back a groan. “Good girl.”

Her smile deepens and I can almost remember how the sun feels upon my face. “I like it when you call me that.”

“Continue to obey me, and you’ll continue to hear it.” I reach down and find the zipper on the side of her skirt, releasing it with a quiet snick.

“Oh?” She arches a brow and her lower lip slips into a little pout. “Last I heard you weren’t my boss anymore.”

I growl lightly and capture her lip between my teeth, giving it a little tug. She sighs and arches her back. I ease her skirt off her hips and she kicks it free.

“That doesn’t mean I’m not in charge.” I tease her with my mouth. She tilts her chin up, trying to capture a kiss and I pull back. “You want me to be in control, don’t you?”

“Yes.” She whimpers beneath me, hips rolling under my palm.

“You like it when I tell you what to do.” I trace the edge of her stockings around her smooth rounded thigh.

Her breathing turns ragged. “So much.”

“You love to please me.” I trace the tip of my tongue over her carotid artery. Enjoy the feel of it pulsing just under the surface. So near, I can almost taste it.

“God, yes.” Her hands close around my bicep. Dig into my flesh. I shut my eyes and thrill at the pain of it. “Tell me what you want.”

“You.” I moan against her neck, low and heady. She’s beyond tempting. It frightens me how easily I could rip into her. How much I don’t want to. She’s so fragile, and yet so strong. “Alice, I want all of you. Body and soul.”

Her slim fingers rake across my scalp. She fists my hair and locks eyes with me. “Do what you want with me, boss. I’m all yours.”

My breath catches in my throat. “How are you real?”

Alice looks up at me and grins, and I can’t wait to make her scream again.

SEVEN

I'm Yours

ALICE

STERIC LOOKS down at me and I swear to fucking Christ his eyes glow.

A low feral rumble starts in his chest and leaks up out of his mouth, and I should be absolutely terrified.

I am terrified, but more than that, I'm so deeply, insanely aroused. That sound falls across my skin and lights me on fire. I never imagined I could feel like this.

I just had the best orgasm of my entire life and already I'm turned on again, wanting more. *What is this magic?*

Of course I love it when he gives me orders. I love the freedom I feel when I don't have to decide anything. All I need is for him to choose, and I'll do anything.

He sits back on his haunches and I'm already cold and empty without his touch.

"Sit up." His voice takes on a hard edge that sends a thrill straight to my core, flooding me with anticipation and desire. My need gathers between my legs and drips down my taint.

Holy fuck, I've never been this wet in my life.

I do as he says and excitement twinges my limbs. I'm practically vibrating from it.

"Strip down to your waist," he commands. His hand slides up my leg, tracing the lines of my stockings and garter. "These stay on."

I was thinking of him when I bought them. Thinking of him every day when I put them on. Hoping he would see them. So happy to know that I was right and they please him.

I slip off my shirt and bra and toss them on the floor by the bed.

He leans in close to my neck and fucking inhales me. I can feel my essence going into him and it drives me insane. He shifts over, straddling me and kneels up.

He takes his gigantic cock and strokes it right in front of my face. That thing about big hands? Definitely true.

“Do you want this?”

I nod and dig my fingers into the mattress. It’s all I can do to keep from drooling. “Yes. Please. I want to taste you.”

A clear bead of pre-cum gathers up on his tip and his cock hardens and reaches up toward my lips. I shiver with excitement.

“Go ahead.” He threads his fingers into my hair and holds my head steady while he traces the pre-cum along my lower lip. “Show me what you can do with that luscious mouth.”

I open for him and draw the flat of my tongue out, curling it up around his pulsing tip. He tastes so good my eyes roll back into my head. I’ve sucked dicks before, but never any like this. He’s ridiculously hard and long and so fucking thick. I have no idea how this is going to work, but damned if I’m not going to try.

I cup his balls in the palm of one hand and he fists himself, holding his cock out so I can lower my mouth onto his shaft. His thick veins roll against my tongue, but there’s no pulse.

His hand is a heavy weight on my head, not pushing me, just there to hold me steady. I pull in a long breath through my nose and relax around his length, taking him all the way to the back of my throat.

“That’s it,” he murmurs. At the same time he edges deeper, just enough to make my eyes water. I swallow reflexively and take him down even more. “That’s my good girl.”

Steric yanks my head back and he pulls out. I gasp for a breath, shaking, and tears slip down my cheeks. His cock hovers right at the edge of my mouth and I'm so hungry for him I could scream.

"Do it," he says. "Tell me how bad you want it. Scream, Alice."

I open my mouth to shout at him and he cuts me off, shoving his cock down my throat again. I take him, suck him down while I moan and shout muffled sounds around his thick, rock hard shaft.

"You want to make me cum?" His mouth is soft as he pants, towering over me with his wide shoulders and sculpted chest. His abs ripple as he pounds into my mouth, hitting the back of my throat with each thrust.

I try to nod, but his fist is in my hair.

I try to say yes, but his cock is in my mouth.

My eyes water from the effort of trying to catch a breath and his face blurs.

Then, I remember he can hear me. He knows my thoughts. He's known what I've been thinking this entire time.

Yes, please, Steric, fucking cum for me. I want you. All of you.

With a shout he yanks my head back. His cock comes free and my shoulders arch, filling my lungs with fresh air.

Warmth floods across my body. His release gushes out all over my chest and drips down the valley between my breasts onto my belly.

I'm drenched in him.

The last of his release spurts out and he sags forward.

I catch his face in my hands. Find his mouth. Kiss him long and full.

"You are so fucking incredible." He tells me. "And mine."

“Yes.” I grin and kiss him again while his cum spreads across my heated skin. “All yours.”

Waste Not, Want Not

STERIC

I SOAK up the sight of Alice stretched out with my essence shimmering across the smooth planes of her body. She's trembling with the rush, and I'm utterly spent.

I may be the one in control, but she owns me.

I've suspected for some time that this is how it would be. It's why I held back for so long, but now that I'm here there's no other outcome I'd rather choose.

I lay beside her and enjoy the sight of her painted in my afterglow for a little while longer before I clean her up with the cloth. She shivers now that its cooled and I draw her up against the line of my body, draping my arm along her back.

She rests her cheek on my shoulder and curls her knee over my hip with a contented sigh.

"So," she says softly. "Vampire, hm?"

My body stills. "Does that frighten you?"

"It should, right?" That little space between her smooth eyebrows pinches up. "I mean, you could kill me if you wanted to—"

"I don't want to." I rush in, cutting her off before she can even finish that sentence. That thought.

"I know." She presses her palm to my chest, and kisses the edge of my jawline and I settle back into the comfort of our embrace. "That's the thing. I trust you. Somehow, it all makes sense and it's amazing. You're amazing."

She gazes up at me with actual stars shimmering in the depths of her eyes. I don't want to crush her, but I need her to know the extent of what she's getting herself into.

"Alice." I comb my fingers through the length of her hair, and twirl a lock around my finger. "My life is very dangerous. I've maintained my distance for a reason. To keep you safe. If word should get out just how important you are to me—"

"I'm important to you?" Her eyes widen.

"Yes." I clutch her to my chest. "Fuck, Alice. Ever since you set foot in my office that first day. I knew you were special. You've changed me. Before, my life was so dull and monotonous. Boring. I thought I would never feel a rush like this again. Never thought I would *feel* anything at all again. Now, I can't possibly imagine my life without you in it."

"Good." She smiles and nuzzles her nose up against my clavicle. A long sigh drifts over my skin. She traces her fingers up and down the expanse of my back, sending little tendrils of electricity roaming up and down my spine.

"No, kitten. There are monsters out there lurking in the shadows that will try to hurt you in order to hurt me." I sigh, tucking my chin against her head. "That attack in the parking lot this morning can't have been a coincidence. There will be more. As long as you're close to me, you're not safe."

"Close to you is the *only* place I'm safe." She rocks her hips against mine. "You're not scaring me away that easy, boss. Besides, I think I took care of myself pretty well."

"You did." I can't help but smile. My chest swells with pride. "But Alice—"

Her finger presses against my lips, hushing me into silence. "But nothing. I'm not giving you up. End of story. We're a good team. In the boardroom and the bedroom both, apparently. You think we can't kick some vampire ass together, too?"

I nip at her finger and her laugh touches something inside me I didn't even know still existed. "You're phenomenal, you know that?"

“Yeah. I do.” A grin spreads across her face and she winks at me.

“Minx.” I growl into her neck and roll her onto her back.

My cock rears to life again. I palm her breast and tug at the pink nub of her nipple, yanking it until she gives me the sound I want to hear. The one that cuts deep inside and opens me up.

I prop myself up on my elbow, letting my hips pin her down to the bed. She wiggles, but it’s ineffectual. I’ve got her trapped and she likes it.

“How are you feeling?” I study her eyes. They’re clearer now.

“Horny.” She tries to pull me down, but I resist.

“It’s important.” I stroke my finger down the line of her silky neck. “I need to know. I can’t stand the thought of anyone else hurting you. Even more abhorrent is the thought of you coming to harm because of me.”

She softens, turns serious as comprehension dawns. “I’m good. Espresso, remember?”

“Espresso.” I shake my head. “If there was ever a more unarousing word, I cannot think of it.”

Alice screws up her face in a lopsided squint and my chest tightens. She’s fucking adorable and sexy as hell. “Moist?”

I growl and drive my thumb into her side. She squirms but I keep her trapped.

“Listen to me carefully.” I dial the tone of my voice down into that octave that makes her breath hitch and her heart rate increase to a high-pitched hum in my ears. “I’m going to sheath my cock with your body and fuck you until I fill you up.”

“Okay.” Her breath turns shallow and a stunning flush creeps up her chest and blossoms on her cheeks. It’s seductive as hell, and I’m having a hard time maintaining control.

“That’s only the beginning.” I slide my palm up across her chest and curl my fingers around the line of her slim throat,

tracing my thumb over the hammering artery just under the surface. “I’m going to drink from you and it’s going to make me hard again. Immediately. Are you listening?”

“Yes, boss.” Her throat works past my grip in a hard swallow. *Boss*. It nearly unhinges me when she calls me that. My control hangs by a thread as thin as the flesh that separates her lifeline from my touch.

“Then I’m going to flip your body over and fill you up from behind.” I watch her reaction, listen to her thoughts drumming inside her head between anticipation and apprehension. She wants it, but she’s not sure she can take it. “You’ve never allowed anyone to penetrate you from behind?”

She licks her lips. “No one’s ever asked.”

“I don’t know whether to be offended on your behalf, or grateful to the dolts you’ve been with for being so unimaginative.” I sigh roughly. “Honestly, a body like yours? It was made to be used in every way possible. What a shame to waste it.”

Alice nods in earnest. “I know, right?”

I can’t help but smile. “I won’t make the same mistake.”

“Okay.” She sighs and I can already feel the heat gathering between her legs.

“Have you got any lubricant?” She’s already flooded with moisture, but when the moment comes, I won’t be gentle.

“Top drawer.” She motions to the bedside table and I open the drawer to discover a trove of sexual delights. Condoms, an array of different lube, and an assortment of toys in all sizes, shapes, and colors.

“My.” I raise my eyebrows. “What have we here?”

Alice nips her bottom lip and shrugs.

“Mm.” I groan and paw through the collection until I find what I need. “We’ll most certainly be exploring this Pandora’s Box of pleasures when the time comes.”

Her nipples peak and gooseflesh prickles her arms when I snap open the bottle of lube and squirt a generous amount on my two middle fingers.

“Tonight, however...” Her knees fall open as I reach between her legs. The heat gathered there nearly sears my flesh. My cock reacts when I follow her seam past the tight band of flesh separating her entrances and find the spot I’m looking for.

Her own moisture floods over my palm as I circle my fingers around her tightly puckered skin.

“I’m going to make you mine in every way possible.” I dip my finger inside. She sucks in a sharp gasp. I trace around the edge of her opening and her body flexes tightly around the intrusion. “I’m going to leave my mark on every inch of your body. Inside and out.”

Her eyes flutter in concentration. Then I feel the exact moment she relinquishes control. *Yes*, I hear her thoughts in my mind as clearly as if she speaks aloud. *Fucking take me.*

I add the second finger as soon as her body softens. She pushes out and opens to me, taking me in and I smooth the extra lube inside her, filling her, preparing her for the moment I’ll take her fully.

She moans beneath me and I know this is right. This is everything. *She* is everything.

I fist her hair and press my lips against her ear, lowering my voice so she knows how deadly serious I am.

“By the time the sun sets, Alice, every goddamned person in this town will know without a single doubt that you belong to me.”

Endless Abyss

ALICE

BEFORE I CAN EVEN CATCH a breath, Steric slams his cock inside my pussy. He hits my limit, and my vision whites out in a shockwave of equal parts pleasure and pain.

I scream and arch my back off the bed.

His roped forearm scoops beneath me, cradling my hips against his as he thrusts, balls deep and it's too much and not enough all at the same time.

“Yes!” My voice echoes up into the rafters. And it's the last thought in my head before he pounds me past coherent thought into nothing but the oblivion of his body slamming into mine.

There's nothing but him.

Nothing but the thickness of his cock stretching me open. His tip banging against the wall of my cervix. Touching me in a place so deep no one else has ever reached it before.

Electric tendrils of pleasure pulse through me every time he thrusts and tears suddenly flood my eyes.

I surrender to the pleasure of him.

I had no idea it could be like this.

Had no idea my body could stand anything like this.

I give myself up to him and the more I let go, the more powerful I feel.

Each thrust pushes the air from my lungs in soft little huffs. I gulp down every breath of air I can get. Hang on for dear life, because there's nothing else I can do.

Nothing else I *want*.

He slows and grips my hips in his bruising grasp. "Open your eyes, Alice."

I can only moan. He drives into me now, slow and deep. His balls smash against my asshole and I remember the way his fingers felt inside me just a second ago. My body flutters around him.

"Look at me Alice." His voice is sharp. My eyes fly open.

Holy fuck. He's spectacular. A living, un-dead, fucking god.

And it's *my* body wrapped around him.

He pushes in all the way and holds steady. My body pulses around his cock. I feel the ridges of his veins against the walls of my pussy.

I ache for relief, for release, and I try to move my hips but he won't let me. Something about being trapped with him inside me like this sends me right up to the edge and I'm so close.

So fucking close I can't even stand it.

That light returns to his eyes, and his pupils vanish. He curls his lip back and two sharp fangs are suddenly there.

I know what's coming.

I know I can't stop it.

I know I don't want to.

But my body reacts on its own.

That primal part of my DNA that's programmed and passed down from my earliest ancestors, the time when humans first became humans, and maybe even before that, takes hold of me.

Everything in me tells me to fight. Tells me to run.

“Yes.” I grit my teeth and bear down, ready to shred the sheets in my fists if this goes on any longer. “Do it.”

Steric lunges and his teeth clamp down. The pressure on my neck matches the pressure from his cock bearing down on me. I scream and claw my nails into his back as he loses himself and floods inside me.

He takes at the same time he gives.

My heart stutters again, just like earlier, but this time it's so much more. So much more because he's filling me to the brim with his hot cum.

All I can do is take it and give myself back to him.

Give him my heat. My pleasure. My life.

The bliss overtakes me and I'm soaring into that endless abyss.

Floating into the ether.

The wave of orgasm slams into me like a fucking freight train.

I'm riding him. Screaming.

Begging for more.

TEN

A Beautiful Mess

STERIC

ALICE'S ORGASM sends her blood flooding into my mouth and it's all I can do to drink it down fast enough.

Her body glows in the dim light.

Pulsating with the power of her pleasure.

I feel it within me and as soon as I release myself into her, I'm hard again.

And I am a man who keeps his word.

I yank free of her and flip her body on the bed. She's limp and pliable, willing. I take a moment to check her heart, and her mind.

She's wrecked nearly beyond comprehension, but one clear thought remains.

More.

It's all I need.

I scoop up her moisture mixed with my cum from the front and smear it up the line of her ass across her rear entrance adding it to the lube already there. Coherence nearly leaves me when I think about her slick tight pussy that I just came in, and how much tighter she'll be on this end.

I can't lose control.

I take a breath.

Blood gathers at the place where I pierced her neck. I haven't closed the bite yet. My body vibrates in a light hum.

Her blood is richer than any human I've ever tasted. And gods know, I've had a lot.

I lick my lips, already salivating for the next bite, and prepare to take her to heights she never knew existed.

"Ready?" I lean over and smooth the damp hair from the back of her neck and press the bulge of my cock against her tight hole. "Once I'm in, breathe deep and push out, just like you did with my hand."

"Mm." Her cheek smashes against the bed when she nods, pushing her lips up into a plump pucker. I kiss her mouth roughly, then wrap the length of her hair around my fist and pull her head back to expose the column of her neck. I cover the tiny puncture wounds with my mouth and suck at the same time I push inside.

She gasps and flexes at the intrusion.

I stop and wait out the initial rush. She fights her body just as her body fights me. The honeyed spice of her blood floods my mouth and I swallow her down. My venom mixes with her bloodstream and she sighs as the high kicks in and carries the pleasure through her body.

She softens and pushes against me, and I slide the rest of my shaft inside her.

One more swallow and I lave my tongue along the wound at her neck, closing it off.

"Good girl." I murmur into her ear. "You're so fucking good, Alice. So fucking tight. Do you even know what you do to me?"

She sighs into the sheet and lifts her hips. I didn't even realize it was possible, but I edge into her just the slightest bit more.

I grind my jaw at the feel of her powerful inner muscles squeezing my cock.

Her blood throbs inside me. Her heat fills me inside and out.

My face flushes with it. I'm actually sweating.

How long has it been since I perspired?

I let out a helpless laugh and sigh into her. Smile against her shoulder as we move together. I'm not as rough. It's her first time this way and I want to show her how good it can feel. I want to show her all the different ways I can bring her pleasure.

I revel in the sound of her body sliding up and down my shaft. She glistens with the mix of lube, her own moisture, and the thickness of my pearlescent cum.

It's beautiful the way her hole spreads wide for me, taking my thickness and length, like a key, my cock was made to fit her precisely.

Like a key, she unlocks something inside me.

I can't wait anymore.

I reach beneath us and circle my finger around her clit to add a gentle pressure. She jerks and whimpers.

"Come for me, Alice." I command her.

"Oh, fuck." She buries her face in the sheet. She's not sure if she can.

"Yes. You fucking can. You will." I drive into her and feel the first flutter of her release. "Come for me, my little minx."

She takes in a sharp inhale and her body clamps down around me. I can't move, even if I wanted to. My balls squeeze and I give up my own release. I drain myself into her, shot after shot, pulsing everything inside her I can possibly give.

We crest and ride our pleasure out together. Undulating in tandem as I spend myself. After the last drop is pumped inside her, I lift to my knees, dragging her hips up with me.

I prop her on my lap and spread her ass wide as I ease out.

My mouth turns up into a smug, satisfied smile. Alice gleams with the flood of my cum and I revel in what a beautiful, glorious mess I've made.

Insatiable Minx

ALICE

AWARENESS DRIFTS back to me in bits and pieces.

I'm in a tub filled with hot water and a mountain of bubbles. My back rests against a solid slab of man flesh.

Not man. Vampire.

My billionaire boss is a vampire.

And he's completely wrecked me in the best way possible.

I'm useless and entirely his.

"Still with me?" His lips tickle my ear, sending shivers of delight through my body. The tip of his finger traces a drop of water up my shoulder to the crook of my neck.

I can only moan in response. *Do I even exist anymore?*

Hard to tell. I might have evaporated into stardust.

He smiles against my temple and presses a kiss to the line of my hair.

I'm grateful for the weightless feeling of the water. My body aches in the worn out kind of way that comes from using muscles that have never been used before. I'm not sorry about it. I sure as hell don't regret it. But the thought of having to fight gravity right now is entirely unappealing.

"Would you like to drink from me?" Steric smooths his hand up over my breast, toying with my nipple. So casual. "It'll help ease the ache a bit."

I open my eyes and my bathroom is filled with warm candlelight. Did I have this many candles? I don't know and I care even less.

My head rests on his shoulder and I roll my head back so I can see the line of his stubbled jaw. I didn't know vampires still had to shave. I like this rougher version of him. It makes me a little sad for all the times I didn't get to experience scruffy Steric. Or maybe not? Clean Steric dominates a boardroom. Scruffy Steric dominates me. Sorry, I'm not sorry.

He strokes a damp hand through my hair drawing my attention back to the tub. To him. "Full disclosure. Since I've already taken blood from you, if you take from me and anything should happen... you'll be turned."

I wasn't entirely sure my brain was back to full functioning levels. It took me a second to work through exactly what he was telling me.

"You mean, if I drink your blood and then die, I'll turn into a vampire?"

"That's right." He turns his eyes on me. "If you drink only once, the effects will wear off after a day or two. No harm done. Exchange on a consistent basis will have a more permanent effect."

I turn my head back and he lifts his left arm from the water. My eyes trail the faintly colored veins journeying up his muscled forearm. "Like what?"

"Rejuvenation. Healing. Extra energy. Sharper vision. Eternal youth." He draws a line down the bridge of my nose. "When the effects wane from that, it can have a devastating effect."

"Like withdrawal?" My heart hammers at the thought. I've never been one to enjoy getting high. I don't even honestly like booze that much. Not to get drunk, anyway. I usually just enjoy a nice glass of wine and a good book right here in the tub.

"Withdrawal. Addiction." He gives my arm a gentle squeeze. "But only in those already prone to it. I gave you the

smallest taste before. Just a drop. How did you feel?”

“Good. Fine.” I try to sit up and my body protests even that motion. I shut my eyes and grip the edge of my gigantic porcelain soaking tub. Then, rest back against his chest again. “Maybe just a little? To take the edge off.”

“I won’t let you take too much,” he assures me.

There’s a soft sound, like a knife piercing the thick flesh of a peach. His wrist comes around and there’s a line of ruby red blood making its way down his muscled forearm from two small punctures at the center of his wrist.

I never felt one way or the other about blood. It never scared me, or grossed me out. I don’t faint at the sight of it.

I also never imagined fucking drinking it.

But the second I see it, the moment my nose fills with the faint tinge of copper, my mouth immediately begins to water. Is this what a heroin addict feels like?

I cradle his wrist in my hand and bring his arm to my mouth. I dart my tongue out and swipe the line of blood all the way up his smooth skin, tasting the freshness of water and the slight hint of lavender in the bubble bath, all mixed in with the heady tang of his powerful blood.

He shudders against my back, and his cock nudges me. The soreness makes me feel full, like he’s still inside me. If I tried to take him again like this I know it would be too much.

It’s that thought that makes me moan and cover the small punctures with my mouth. All I want is for him to fill me again. To hold him inside me forever. I swirl my tongue over the open wounds and my head spins. It’s not exactly the same as when he takes from me, but it feels just as marvelous.

Instead of drunk and heavy, I feel sharper. Lighter. Like I can fucking fly.

I press my lips down harder preparing to suck, but he pulls away. I’m left with only a smear on my lip that I swipe off with my tongue.

I scowl. “I wasn’t done.”

“That’s enough.”

I sit up and spin around, the ache suddenly vanished. Heat sears through my body and I’m shockingly angry. “I wasn’t finished.”

Steric’s hand captures my throat right at the juncture under my chin. He closes tight enough to hold me back, but not enough to cut off my air.

“Alice.” He stares me dead in the eyes. “That’s. Enough.”

Oh. I blink hard. *Ohh.*

He waits a moment and I hold very still while his power crests and soars through my body.

“There it is.” He watches my face closely. His finger presses into my neck at my pulse point. “Breathe.”

My eyes flutter shut and I lean into his touch, riding out the soaring high. Breathing through the thrum of his blood coursing through me. It was barely a few drops. Hardly even a taste and already I’m anxious for more.

I hold still until I start to come down. It doesn’t take long, but the effect doesn’t fade in my body. I feel stronger. I can hear the gentle fizz of the popping bubbles. Smell the soft melting wax of the candles. The soreness in my muscles is gone. My heart pounds like I just ran a marathon, and I feel like I could probably take off and run another in six seconds flat.

Before too long, the tension releases out of my shoulders and I start to melt. Steric lowers his hand from my throat to splay his palm against the top of my chest. I rest against him and catch my breath.

“Good girl,” he tells me softly.

I smile and open my eyes. I love hearing those words in his deep rumbling voice. Knowing he’s proud of me makes me feel strong and happy, and arrogant. In the business world, people talk. The position of Executive Assistant to Steric Caldwell was ravenously coveted and notoriously difficult to keep. Nobody lasted more than a few weeks.

Nobody but me.

He examines my pupils and looks satisfied. “You took it well.”

“Didn’t think I would?” I spread my legs and slide onto his lap. I rest my hands on his gigantic shoulders and wiggle my ass along the length of his cock, finally ready to feel it inside me again now that my soreness is gone.

He tilts his head back against the thick towel he’s draped over the curled edge of the tub and shrugs lightly. “There was a slim chance you could have run screaming straight through the plate glass window.”

My mouth drops open.

He holds up his forefinger and thumb a centimeter apart and squints at me between them. “Slim.”

I grumble out a rough sound in the back of my throat and lean forward. My nipples reach out and pebble along his damp, smooth chest. I rock my hips across his length and his cock extends to its full length between my legs.

His hand rests on my hip and digs in with his bruising strength, holding me still.

I pout. “You don’t want to fuck me again?”

“No.”

My pout increases, but it does no good. Steric’s grip remains strong and there’s nothing I can do to move him, despite the fact I can feel the strength of his lie rubbing against my slick opening.

He rests back and his eyes slide shut. He sighs, sending ripples through the quickly fading bubbles between us.

“Your body needs rest,” he says finally. “Despite the effects of the blood. I didn’t give you enough to heal you completely, only ease the ache. Your pain sensors are dulled. If I ruin you again now, you won’t be able to tell me what you’re truly feeling. I could injure you. And that’s the last thing I want to do.”

“Ruin me,” I repeat, loving the way it sounds. I’d let him ruin me straight into the ground.

He smirks, and I remember he can hear my thoughts. “Insatiable minx.”

He flicks the tip of my nipple and I shiver and dig my nails into his shoulder. His smirk turns into a genuine grin. There’s a dimple on one side of his cheek I never noticed before. Maybe because I’ve never seen him smile like that until now.

His phone pings an alert for a new message and it draws our attention. It’s resting on the little stool I keep next to the tub to hold my wine. He reaches over and grabs it. I scrunch my nose and clench my thighs around his waist.

“You’re naked in a tub with me and you’re thinking about work?”

He focuses on the screen and deep creases furrow across his forehead. He sighs and pushes his long dark hair back as he taps out a message with his thumb.

“What’s wrong?” I watch him carefully. “Is it the Halway merger?”

“Nevermind the Halway merger.” He places the phone back on the stool and leans up, capturing my face between his hands. He kisses the tip of my nose. “You don’t work for me anymore, remember?”

“But—” My protest is cut off with a kiss.

“But nothing.”

He delves into my mouth and makes it really hard to remember anything at all besides the incredible way my insides turn to mush when he rakes his tongue along mine.

Trouble Has A Name

STERIC

I KISS Alice thoroughly and keep her thighs fitted closely against me. Allowing her to stroke me with her slick opening for her own pleasure, but nothing more. It would be easy enough to let go and damage her. I don't want to do that.

She's too important.

Also, I enjoy the balancing act. Treading that fine line between pain and pleasure. Waiting to enter her again is sweet torture. I savor the pang of desire raging in my cock and focus on her.

She tilts her head, draping her long fair hair all the way down her back like cornsilk. Exposing the column of her neck, and shoving her breasts in my face. She knows exactly what she's doing.

My little minx.

I take her breast into my mouth and tease her with my tongue, eliciting a deep moan from her. She pants and grinds harder. I use my thumb to pull back her hood of skin and reveal the tiny, powerful little bead of her clit. She's impeccably manicured. Waxed completely bare back to front except for a perfect little thatch of hair at the top. The smoothness of her body moving along my shaft is pure ecstasy.

Her core convulses around me and I can tell by the blush rising on her chest, she's nearly reached her climax.

“Alice, look at me.” She’s lost in her own pleasure, head thrown back. I grip her waist and curve my hand around the base of her skull, bringing her head down to mine. “Show me your face when you come.”

My command unravels her as I knew it would.

She shouts behind tightly pressed lips. Tries to keep her eyes open. Fails. Her nails scrape my shoulders like daggers. It’s splendid, watching the way her face contorts with the force of her orgasm.

I let her ride through the aftershocks, holding her steady while I rake my shaft along her crevice. I can’t be inside her, but it’s enough. The look on her face is enough.

She begins to droop, but I raise her hips. “Kneel up.”

Alice comes out of the water just enough. I take my shaft in my hand and jerk off until the pressure builds and I shoot my release along her opening. She sighs and balances herself on the edge of the tub.

My cum drips down from her, while the last bit of my release spurts over the tip of my head.

“Stunning.” I cup her, massaging my thick cum along her seam, then slide towards the back to make sure every inch of her is painted with me. “You’re positively gorgeous, Alice.”

She’s watching me and her thoughts are hazy in a post-coital buzz. I lean back and study her vanquished state. Her tongue darts across her lips. A devious idea comes to mind.

I hold up my hand. “Want to know what we taste like together?”

I still haven’t found her limit. Still don’t know how far she’d go to please me. Her mind reels over the idea. How taboo. She shouldn’t want it, but she does.

“Filthy little minx.” All she needs is my command. “Lick my hand, Alice.”

She lowers her head and I hold still while she rakes her tongue along the length of my middle finger. She closes her

mouth around me and draws me in. Her cheeks hollow lightly, and she sucks greedily like she sucked my cock.

I delight in the way she grips my wrist. How hungry she is for all of me. “Miscreant.”

Her eyes flash. She likes it when I call her dirty names.

“Lascivious hoyden.” I test her.

She shivers and removes my finger from her mouth with a tight little pop.

“Mm.” I groan and lean up, capturing her in my embrace. “You *are* trouble.”

“So I’ve been told.” She curls her arms around my neck. Kisses the bridge of my nose.

“By whom?” I like how she enjoys my name calling, but the thought of anyone else degrading her irks me.

Her eyes roll into her head and her spine softens. “My parents.”

It catches me off guard.

I’ll admit, I never looked into her background. I left that up to Dante. I didn’t want to know. At first because I thought it would be easier to drop her when she inevitably didn’t work out. Like all the others.

Then it was because she did.

Whenever she was in my presence, in my realm, she was all mine. I didn’t like thinking of her with a life outside of my reach. Now I can’t imagine letting her out of my sight. Not even for a moment.

I squeeze her tighter.

“They worry because they love me. Isn’t that what all parents do? I don’t tell them everything, and we get along fine.” She shrugs. “My dad never talked about his work. I don’t talk about mine.”

I don’t like it, but I let it drop.

A shiver runs through her and I realize the water's turned cold.

“Get out.” I nudge her and we rise.

She dons a plush robe from a hook next to the tub and hands me a thick towel. A theme emerges. The Corvette. Silk stockings. Linen sheets. Massive tub. A drawer full of toys and various sexual accoutrements.

My dear little Alice is a hedonist.

Everything in her life is here because it brings her pleasure. Including me.

And I thought I was the one using her.

My, my.

Burn or Be Burned

STERIC

I SCRUB the towel over my skin enough that I won't leave a trail and follow Alice into the main loft. She pulls an elegant crystal pitcher of orange juice from the refrigerator and pours a glass.

“Do you need anything?”

“Thank you. I'm quite satisfied, for now.”

This dynamic is familiar and we fall into it easily. Alice as my subordinate. Taking care of my needs. There's something new and fresh buzzing between us now and I'm afraid to examine it too closely.

It burns like a small flame, and if I get too near too soon I'll either snuff it out or get burned.

I lean on the edge of the stool at the counter and glance at my phone again. Dante's message glares back at me.

Octavian.

But what's the end game? I'd responded.

“Beet juice?” Alice asks.

My eyes flick up to meet hers. She quirks an eyebrow.

Devious.

“So.” She leans forward, resting her elbows on the counter. Her breasts push up in the gap of her robe. She taps her fingers on the glass and narrows her eyes. “All those times I busted

my ass to bring you beet juice from that place down the street... ?”

“Straight down the sink the moment your back was turned.”

“Ugh.” She shakes her head. “You could have told me to stop bringing them.”

“It was a convincing ruse.” I keep my amusement to myself.

A new message from Dante appears.

Either he knows she's important and he's sending a message, or he's simply fucking with you. He knows how to get under your skin.

That he does. The thought of my rival knowing anything at all about Alice makes me itch.

Or it's nothing. A random mugging from one of his lowlife scum buckets, Dante adds.

Find out, I send back.

I hardly think he's correct that it was random, but that would be the most favorable outcome. If a minion of Octavian's truly dared to act of his own accord, it would be a breach of our delicate truce.

Retribution was distributed evenly when Alice plunged her heel into his chest. That should be the end of it.

But, things were never simple when it came to Octavian. He was always scheming.

Another message from Dante slides up. *I'm coming over there.*

You absolutely will not.

I want to meet this vixen of yours.

NO.

My worlds are colliding and I don't like it. I've kept them very carefully separated for a reason.

I place my phone screen down on the counter and give my attention back to Alice. She downs the last of her orange juice and lifts her pert little nose up in the air. Gives me a cold shoulder.

She's upset I won't tell her about the message.

Well, well.

A mantra runs through her head. *Not my circus. Not my monkeys.*

"Even if you wanted to know, I wouldn't tell you." I tuck my elbows up and lean forward.

"Is it about me?"

I don't blink. "Yes."

She goes over to the sink and rinses out her glass. "That man I killed this morning?"

"Not a man. And you didn't kill him. He was already dead."

She rests her hands on the edge of the sink. "And why don't I deserve to know?"

"Because it isn't safe. The more you know, the more danger you're in. It's bad enough out there as it is. I won't willingly put you in harm's way."

"I made my choice." She shrugs. Jaw tight.

"You did." We're edging into something very dangerous. The air between us crackles across my skin. Is this the button I shouldn't push to drive her past her breaking point? Because I suddenly very much want to push it.

I press my palms flat to the polished cement countertop. It's all I can do not to leap over and slam her into the cabinet and fuck her so hard the wood splinters.

Her heartbeat pounds in my ears, keeping time with the warmth of her blood humming in my veins. "I wish you hadn't."

That fire. That passion.

It's exactly why she was the only one left standing in a very long line of previous assistants. The fact she never hesitated to speak her mind to me. To tell me when I was wrong. To look me straight in the eyes and say the word *no*.

That flame grows more intense and I feel the heat grow. It's burn or be burned. There is no extinguishing this now.

"Alice." I speak her name calmly, with only the slightest hint of danger slipping through.

She stands her ground. "I'm not afraid of you."

I level my gaze on her and let my control slip, ever-so-slightly. The bloodlust seeps in. My vision sharpens along with my teeth.

I hone in on her. "You should be."

To her deep credit she doesn't flinch. If she were to take off and run right now it would be endgame for both of us.

But there is the slightest hesitation in her gaze. A healthy fear. An instinct to recognize danger when it lurks. That's what's sending adrenaline through her right now. So thick in the air, I can taste it.

That primal caution crafted into every animal of prey.

I can also smell how deeply it arouses her.

My nostrils flare as I pull in her scent. Saliva floods my mouth.

"Alice." Her name leaves my throat in a growl. "Don't. Fucking. Move."

A Moan and A Prayer

ALICE

I FREEZE IN PLACE.

Steric climbs up onto the massive kitchen island and stalks toward me on hands and knees.

His cock hovers heavy and long between his legs. Muscles ripple and rope along his back. Eyes glow like a goddamn panther. His dark hair falls forward across his forehead. Messy and wild.

He's fucking feral.

My body wants to run.

It screams at me to flee from this creature. This monster that will most definitely fucking kill me.

But all I see is Steric.

I know he's not a monster.

I know he doesn't want to hurt me. I'm safe.

As long as I don't run.

I grip the rim of the sink and hold on for dear life, as he edges near.

His hand scoops around my neck and then his mouth is on me. Devouring me. Lifting me up until only the barest tips of my toes touch the floor. I close my hands around his thick forearms and hang on for the ride.

My tongue slices open along his tooth. The tang of my own blood fills my mouth and he swallows me down. He

drinks from me and I flood for him.

He seats himself on the edge of the counter and captures me between his knees. He pulls away and his lips are swollen from my kiss. Smearred red with my blood. His tongue darts out, sweeping his mouth clean. His chest heaves. His eyes are soft and swimming. Unfocused.

“Alice.”

My name is a moan. A prayer.

It turns my knees weak. I’ve never come this many times in one day and already I’m slick and hot again, aching for release.

He tugs at my hair. Massages my neck. The danger is gone now that he’s tasted me. All that’s left is the evidence of his desire.

It rises between us, jutting out from between his legs, eager and wanting.

I lean over and put my mouth on him. Lick straight up his length and close down over his head. I swirl my tongue around the silk of his sensitive tip, spreading the clear bead of moisture that’s gathered there.

He inhales sharply, and I take him in further. I relax my throat and breathe through my nose, letting him all the way into my mouth.

I swallow around him and he hisses between his teeth.

I do it again.

“Alice.”

My name isn’t a prayer anymore. It’s a plea. Then a shout.

I grab his balls in my hand and hold on.

His hips judder and I ride him with my mouth. My eyes sting from the effort of forcing my body to rebel against all my natural instinct of self-preservation.

It doesn’t want to choke. But I’m not choking. I’m okay.

I breathe past the panic and squeeze his balls harder. They try to jump from my palm. I won't let them.

His thighs vibrate around my body.

There's no way I can speak. But I don't need to.

I shut my eyes and focus.

It's okay. Let go. I've got you. I roll my eyes up so I can see his face. His jaw is slack, stomach flexing with the effort of his restraint. *Trust me.*

Steric chokes out a sound and his balls rip from my palm, shooting up against his body. His stream floods down my throat and I somehow manage not to gag.

I take all of it.

All of him.

When he's finished I straighten and we're at eye level.

There's a smear of cum on my lip and I leave it there for him. I love the satisfied look of possession in his charcoal eyes.

He hooks his finger under my chin and kisses it off.

I curl my hand around his neck and keep his nose next to mine, capturing his gaze.

"I'm not afraid of you." He tries to pull back and I don't let him. "I want all of you. You don't want to share your life with me? Okay. Don't. Walk out that door right now and don't ever come near me again. I fucking dare you."

A Demon of Chaos

STERIC

I'VE CREATED A MONSTER.

Alice scares the hell out of me. There's no way I can walk out that door and we both know it.

What have I done?

"No. You're mine." I growl and plunder her mouth. The taste of my cum still lingers on her tongue with the rich spice of her blood.

She pulls back and her chin is roughened by the scrape of my stubble. Her hair is a mess and all of her makeup is gone. She's fresh and real and more beautiful than I've ever seen her.

"Mine." I tell her again. I tell myself. "And you'll do everything I say."

She tilts her head to the side, fingertips tapping lightly on my thigh. "Will I though?"

I trace back, trying to figure out exactly where I lost control.

Fucking hell. Did I ever have it?

"Alice... ." I thrust all the darkest warning into her name that I can muster.

There's a glint of a smile. The very barest hint. Right there on the edge of her terrible gorgeous intoxicating mouth.

I'm off the counter in a flash. Shoving her against the cabinet like I should have done earlier.

“You wretched...” Her skull hits with a thud and her breath leaves her lungs in a huff. She can’t hide her smile now. Doesn’t even try. “Cunning. Devious little—”

A heavy knock cuts me off.

We both turn and stare at the door, then face each other again.

“Expecting anyone?” I ask.

Alice shakes her head.

I stalk over to the door and glance through the viewer. “Oh, hell.”

“I know you’re in there, darling. I can fucking smell you.” Dante waves and grins. “And her, too, for that matter. Let us in, eh?”

“Who is it?” Alice comes over.

“My worst nightmare.” I sigh. “Just remember, minx. This is what you wanted.”

I open the door and Dante sweeps in with the energy of three tornadoes.

“My gods, I thought you were never going to open the door.” The demon heads straight for Alice. Its voice lowers an octave and takes on a rumble like a large predatory cat or a very fast car. “And you must be the vixen. Hello, Vixen!”

So. This is happening. No turning back now.

“Alice, Dante.” I wave my hand between them. “Dante, Alice.”

“He wasn’t wrong.” The demon takes her hand and sweeps its lengthy form into an elegant bow. It’s not as tall as I am, but it would insist it is. Dante rises and kisses the tips of her fingers. “You *are* enchanting.”

“I—” Alice backs up against the counter, thoughts swirling. Simultaneously charmed and confused. Also, unsettlingly aroused. “Okay. Hi. What’s happening exactly?”

A bitter laugh tangles in the back of my throat and comes out half-snort. I retrieve my underwear from the floor, slip on the black boxer-briefs, and head back over.

“No need to cover yourself on our account, darling.” Dante smooths a hand over foppish violet hair and leans in, casting a dramatic stage whisper to Alice. “He doesn’t want us to know what an enormous boner you give him.”

I roll my eyes.

The demon straightens, arms out wide. “But it’s no wonder! Look at you! He didn’t do you justice!”

Dante grips Alice’s face in one hand and smashes her lips into a pout like a codfish. Her eyes dart in my direction, desperate for rescue.

I only shrug, and watch it all unfold precisely as I knew it would. Maybe even better. Worse?

Predictable.

She pulls herself free and edges into the protective line of my body. I wrap my arms around her and fit my cock against the swell of her ass. She shivers in my grasp and nudges back.

I smile at the flare in my friend’s nostrils as the demon catches the scent of Alice’s arousal. “Dante is my chaos demon.”

“Demon of Chaos!” Dante sings out. “A fine distinction but an important one. What have you got to snack on in here? Besides this delectable little treat, I mean.”

The demon heads to the refrigerator and paws through the contents.

What the fuck? Alice wonders silently.

“You wanted everything. All my secrets.” I murmur in her ear while I cradle her to my chest. “This is my largest one. It likes cheese.”

“Purple Haze? You have Purple Haze!?” The demon straightens and points a finger at Alice. “Oh, we like you. This

one's a keeper. We said she would be the one. Tell us we were right, darling. Have you got any crackers?"

"You get used to it." I kiss the top of her head, give her ass a hearty squeeze and leave her to lie in the bed she made.

Watch Out For The Tail

ALICE

I HAVE ABSOLUTELY no idea what the fuck is going on right now. A few hours ago, I thought vampires and demons were just a fairy tale.

A myth.

Now I've got one of each standing here in my apartment and they're both phenomenally hot. And I get the distinct impression they'd share me if I let them.

My knees quake at the thought.

Would I let them?

Steric throws me a dark look over his shoulder on his way over to the bed.

“Okay, seriously. What the fuck is going on right now?” I follow him and lower my voice. “Why is this guy rummaging through my cheese stash?”

“Not a guy. Demon. We're neither here nor there, vixen.” Dante calls out. The demon's head is still inside my refrigerator. It's wearing extremely well-fitted jeans that show off a perfectly rounded—

Steric's hand slips around my throat and I turn into a statue. His thumb caresses the place where he bit me earlier. It's still tender, and his touch makes it tingle like ice. So cold it burns.

“You're mine. The demon isn't allowed to touch you without my permission. No one is.” Steric's voice is low and

intense in my ear. “I’m going to take a nap now. And you two are going to be on your best behavior. Remember, you asked for this.”

Dante waves me back over to the counter. “Come over here, little vixen. He’s going to pretend to ignore us while we get to know each other. Like an ostrich, that one. Head in the sand. Did you hear that, darling? We called you an ostrich!”

Steric plants a light kiss on my cheek. “Watch out for the tail.”

He releases me and stretches out on my wrecked bed, burying his face in my pillow. I might be concerned about his air supply if he wasn’t already dead.

“That one’s all mush in the middle. Crack him open and he’ll ooze a very pretty shade of angst.” The demon grins. “Trust me.”

I get the distinct feeling I should do anything but that.

Dante sweeps me back over to the island where an elaborate charcuterie board magically awaits.

I didn’t even realize I had that much food. I usually just grab takeout on the way home.

“So, my little vixen, have you been having fun? It certainly reeks of fun in here. Has my darling Steric tried that swirly whirly thing with his tongue yet? It’s certainly not as good as what we can do, but it’s adorable how he tries.” Dante leans against the counter, eyes flashing. They’re an entrancing shade of violet, the same as its thick, perfectly mussed hair.

The demon winks. Pupils flash from the normal round kind humans have to vertical slits like a snake. It’s startling. Mesmerizing. “Here, have some cheese, you’ll need your strength.”

I accept the goat cheese spread on a cracker and nibble it. “For what?”

“Oh, you sweet, innocent. He truly hasn’t told you a thing, has he?” The demon’s mouth spreads across its face extremely wide, but strangely it works with the rest of its features.

Where Steric is rugged and thick with roped muscles, Dante is elegant and graceful. As if a perfectly sculpted Greek statue stepped right off a pedestal and said hello.

“How do you, um... know Steric?”

“How do we know him?” The demon leans in and literally inhales me. “Intimately, vixen. We fucked him all the way up and down the Danube in ‘42.”

“1942?” I stare.

I can’t help it.

Steric is dark and dangerous. I know he could hurt me, but I don’t get the feeling he would, or wants to. Dante on the other hand, looks innocent as an angel. The charm the demon turns on is the most frightening kind.

The kind that pretends not to be dangerous in the least until it’s got you in its jaws and it’s squeezing the life out of you and you’re blissed out and begging for more without ever knowing you’re actually dead.

“Adorable. You humans are so terribly new.” The demon gets a smear of cheese on its finger. Its tongue whips out, blackish-purple, forked, and narrow, curling like a ribbon around the entire length of its finger, then back up into its mouth. Its eyes are on me the entire time. “It was 1342.”

My snack gets stuck in my throat and I choke. “Jesus Christ!”

“No, he was quite before Steric’s time.” Dante pumps my arm up and down and pats my back. “But we had some fun with him, too. Except for the sand. It truly does get in *all* the cracks.”

“Hang on, you—*what?*” There’s about twelve different things my brain is trying to process all at once. “How old is Steric? How old are *you?*”

“It’s rather uncouth to inquire about a demon’s age, but clearly the vampire has kept you woefully uneducated. Deepest apologies.” Dante eats another cracker. “Our Steric’s father was the Grand Prince of the first Hungarian dynasty.

He's just over a thousand years old, at this point. Though what is time, honestly, but a vicious construct of humanity? Let's get you some wine, dear."

I lay my head on my arms and groan. I knew Steric was a vampire, but I was thinking a few hundred years, not an entire millennium.

"What the actual... ." I suck in a long breath through my nose and breathe out through my mouth. I lift my head. "Hungarian Prince? I swear to fuck, if you tell me he's Dracula—"

"No, no, no!" Dante laughs and brings me some wine. "We told Stoker that story as a joke. Then he went and wrote it down. Can't believe he found anyone to actually publish it. Hilarious. Anyway, don't worry about the age gap. Our Steric is still quite limber, as you've already discovered."

The demon stands there and studies me down the line of its slim nose. I gulp down my wine. Dante pours more.

"It's clear why he likes you." There's something subtle in the tone I can't quite pinpoint. My head is spinning too fast. I'm having snacks with an actual demon, and we're talking about the thousand-year-old vampire I just fucked.

Multiple times.

In just one morning.

Where the hell does this fall on the Bechdel Test?

I lean in and lower my voice. I can't help myself. "He told you he likes me?"

"Please. He never shuts up about you. Alice this and Alice that. Honestly, if this whole thing didn't happen soon?" The demon twirls its finger around in the air. "We were going to come over here and smash your faces together all on our own."

I can't help but laugh. I still haven't had enough to eat and the wine hits hard. It's been a weird day.

"Took him long enough, didn't it?" I give myself up to the slow, melting feeling of the wine spreading through my body.

“Entirely too long.” Dante leans closer. Just plain beautiful. Like a snake is beautiful. “You are deeply enchanting, little vixen.”

I smile at the alluring lilt in his voice. It’s like music. Or tinkling bells. Or—

Something nudges my ankle and twines up my calf, gently massaging as it slinks across my skin.

It sets my core throbbing and my knees drift open slightly until I happen to glance down. There’s something thick, the color of a ripe plum winding up my leg.

I yelp and tumble off my stool backwards. Dante catches me. I struggle and try to kick the thing free. It grips tighter. “What the fuck is that?”

“I warned you to watch for the tail, didn’t I?” Steric is stretched out on his back, observing from the bed. His cock is filling again, tenting the black fabric of his underwear.

The tip of the demon’s tail tickles the back of my knee and I squirm, which only presses me tighter against its chest. Before I can blink, Steric is there.

Eyes burn, and he bares his teeth. He fists the demon’s hair and yanks its head back in a sharp angle, exposing the pointed knobs on the ridge of its throat.

Steric presses his face against the side of Dante’s neck and the demon’s eyes flutter shut. Its throat works in a loud gulp. Its chest rises and falls like a bellows.

“Mine,” Steric growls.

I didn’t get to see his teeth before, but they’re right in front of me now. Long and sharp. My inner thigh pulses where he first bit me, and the bulbed tip of the demon’s tail trails up to the same spot, prodding it gently.

“Darling, you know I only live to break the rules.” Dante shivers, and the sensation ripples through the tail all the way up my thigh.

I tuck my lip between my teeth, trying to hold back, but a moan forms in my throat anyway. Steric inhales sharply, and

shifts his eyes to me.

My leg is trapped. I couldn't run even if I wanted to.

“We've been so very naughty.” A smile curls the demon's lips. “Are you going to punish us, darling? Please, say yes.”

In Knots

STERIC

PLEASE, say yes.

Alice's plea echoes in my mind. Loud and clear.

Her eyes pool dark with desire. She darts her tongue out across her lips and her throat works past a guttural moan.

I'm desperate for another taste of her, but it's much too soon.

I sink my teeth into the demon instead, and Dante's blood fills my mouth. Demon blood is much thicker than human blood. And much more powerful.

Like water versus an aged whiskey.

Alice is more of a fine wine. Limited edition. She needs to be savored.

I watch her, watching me.

Dante's tail winds up her smooth, tight thigh. Her thick robe is thrown open, and her knees part, exposing her ravishing pink center.

She's already wet again.

Dripping.

The tip of Dante's tail edges toward her center.

I want to watch. The demon is quite talented with that particular appendage, and I long to see the pleasure play out across Alice's face, but also...

I wrench away from Dante's neck and fix my gaze on Alice's hooded eyes.

"How shall we punish this menace, my minx?" I lick the luscious blood from my lips and she shivers. "Shall we tie it up and make it watch while I explore that slick little pussy of yours?"

A breath leaves her in a rush. She grips the edge of the chair. Her head is loose on her neck when she dips it in a nod.

"Speak up, Alice," I order.

A dusky pink blush blossoms up her chest and along her neck. "Yes."

I jerk my chin toward the bedside trove of toys. "Get the rope I saw in your drawer earlier."

She hops up, and her bare feet patter along the floor. I relish the sound of her obedience. Dante's blood courses through my body, making my vision sharper, and my muscles sing.

"I told you not to come," I snarl into the demon's ear.

"Darling, you know we never *come* without your permission." Dante's wide mouth unravels into a devious grin.

"Well, you're not getting it." I strip the demon in a flash, leaving it nude. Its skin darkens into the same translucent aubergine color as its tail, and its hair shimmers into a light pink.

Alice returns and stops short with a little gasp.

"Like what you see, vixen?" Dante winks at me. "Of course she'd be into it. No spoilers, darling. Promise?"

I glance down at the sexless mound between Dante's legs. It's smooth for now, but I know what the creature is capable of. It *is* a Demon of Chaos as it previously stated, and what fun would it be to ruin the surprises I know it has in store?

"Only if you behave." I shove the demon roughly against the column in the center of the loft. This architectural feature is turning out to be quite a convenient gift. "Alice. The rope."

Dante willingly steps back and grips the column. I know the demon is willing, because if it wasn't the place would be in ruins by now. Also, it grins and licks my face.

I crack it across the cheekbone with the back of my hand. "The tighter, the better, my minx. Make sure it can't get free."

A low chuckle builds within the demon's chest. Its eyes glitter with good humor. I smile. It's simply not possible for a mere human to tie up a demon. This is just a formality.

Alice comes around the column and ducks up under my arm, curling into my chest. "It won't get loose."

"Of course we won't." Dante winks. The muscles in its arms and chest strain as the demon tests the knots. A slight frown burrows across its crimson forehead.

I stroke Alice's hair and don a smug, satisfied look. "Good girl. Go get the stool."

Alice brings the high bar stool over. I place it just out of reach from the length of the demon's tail.

"Sit." Alice sits in full view of the demon. Dark hunger fills its eyes and makes my cock twitch. I fully intend for this to be nothing less than pure, exquisite torture for all of us.

"Now," I place my hands on Alice's shoulders, "shall we begin?"

An Ember Ignites

ALICE

I DIG my fingertips into the edge of the stool, so fucking on fire already I could scream. Instead, I bite down hard on my bottom lip while Steric runs his fingers through the length of my hair.

He adjusts my shoulders so my spine is arched and my chest is up and thrust out. My nipples zing under Dante's hungry gaze.

It feels very much like he wants to eat me.

And I'm not sure I'd mind.

The terror of that thought travels through my body, raising goosebumps along my skin.

Or maybe, that's just the cool air hitting my chest as Steric slides the robe off my shoulders, exposing my skin.

The back of his first two fingers barely whisper against my cheek, traveling down my neck. His lips tickle my ear. "Breathe, Alice."

A little whimper escapes my lips.

Dante's tail gently waves back and forth, flicking at the tip like a feline waiting to pounce. Muscles ripple across the demon's chest when it flexes against the knots I tied. I follow the motion down across its abs to the smooth place between its legs.

Now I understand it was being literal when it said it was 'neither here nor there.'

But that tail...

I flinch when Steric pinches down on my nipple. Then the other. It hurts and I love it.

He cups my breast and massages my flesh, circling slowly between tweaks. My eyelids droop and I arch my back even more into the cup of his palm.

“You like to be touched, don’t you.” Steric murmurs between kisses along my shoulder. His hands are warm now. Smooth. Sensual.

An ember ignites between my legs. My lower belly aches.

Slow burn.

“Yes.” I lean my head back and rest against his wide chest as he leans forward, trailing his hands down my waist.

He edges his fingers along the inside of the robe where it’s draped across my thighs. Oh-so-careful not to touch my skin.

I squirm.

His left hand cups my throat. “No.”

It only makes me want to do it more. I moan lightly. My hips roll.

“Alice.” His voice is low and brimming with warning.

The demon snarls and flexes against the ropes.

My heart pounds so hard I can feel it pulsing in my throat beneath Steric’s grip.

“Open your legs.” Steric’s voice is tight and quiet. His cock nudges at my lower back. “Let the demon see what my touch does to you.”

Dante inhales audibly when I spread my knees. The demon’s tail whips harder, then strains out straight toward me. The bulbed tip looks like one of my butt plugs and I want to know if it would feel the same inside me.

“Who do you belong to, Alice?” Steric presses his face against mine. His arm drapes down my front, while he maintains his grip around my throat with his other hand.

“You,” I tell him.

He tightens around me, resting his fingertips right at the crux of my thigh. I fight the urge to writhe. “Then why are you thinking of the demon’s tail inside you?”

“I—” I shut my eyes and breathe in through my nose. I swallow hard past the strength of Steric’s grip. “I’m just curious.”

“Curious.” He makes a rough noise in the back of his throat. His breath flutters across my cheek. “You want me to let it touch you? I thought we had an agreement only to let it watch.”

I grit my teeth. Grumble in frustration.

His fist tightens enough around my throat that my vision grays at the edges. I hold completely still. My heart beats so fast it hums.

“What would you have me do, Alice.” His voice is barely audible. Fingers play at the edge of my crux. The moisture gathers between my legs, thick and heavy, and drips down along my taint. “Tell me.”

“I want—” I can’t even think. There’s nothing past the burning need between my legs. Nothing more than his hands on me. Nothing else besides his breath on my skin, and his cock nudging my back. “Fuck. I just want *you*.”

“That’s my good girl.” Steric lowers his hand from my throat and the air rushes in. I gasp and shudder in his arms.

My eyes fly open. Everything is clearer now. Brighter.

“Watch the demon, my little minx.” Steric directs my gaze to Dante and the demon locks eyes with me and purrs. “Watch it while I remind you both exactly who you belong to.”

Naughty

STERIC

IT'S all I can do not to bend Alice over this instant and pound my raging cock into her.

Dante rumbles with excitement. The muscles in the demon's neck grow taut and bulge with the strain. Its breath comes fast and it shivers and grunts while a lump forms at the crux of its thighs.

"Watch, Alice." I murmur against the satin of her cheek. "Watch what happens when I do this."

Alice gasps when I trace my fingers down her center. She's flooded and so hot she nearly burns me. It's glorious.

Dante reacts exactly as I'd expected.

The demon's Chaos takes over and it sprouts a knob from its center that extends into a ferocious cock. The shaft stands up hard and throbbing, growing more detailed as it fills out into a pointed tip that matches the end of the tail. Dante leans forward, heaving with the effort.

Alice writhes under my touch. "Holy fuck."

"It wants you." I tell her. "Watch how its nostrils flare when it catches your scent."

I scissor my fingers wide and spread her open, pulling back the thin bit of skin to reveal her tight clit. Dante heaves in a breath. Eyes glitter. The cock pulses and emits a neon-pink trail of pre-cum from its tip.

“Just like that.” My own hardness pounds. I rub Alice’s center, spreading her moisture across her swollen, hungry core. “It likes that. It wants to know if you’re really as hot and wet as you look.”

The demon flexes its fists. I’m positive that this is where it breaks free, and I brace myself to intercept. But it remains locked around the column.

“You did an excellent job with those knots, Alice.” I hum against her throat and play with her peaked nipple while I continue to circle her clit down below. “I’m impressed. Impressed, but not surprised. You never do anything halfway.”

She eases to the edge of the stool and her hips roll against my hand. I let her go, once, twice, then pull away. She whines.

“Please.” I do enjoy hearing her beg.

“Yes, darling.” Dante finally speaks up. The demon hisses between sharp teeth. Long tongue flicks out, tasting the scent of Alice’s pleasure in the air. “Please.”

I *tut, tut, tut* and pace between them. I run my gaze down Dante’s heaving body and flick the tip of the demon’s bulging cock.

It gnashes. Eyes flash lightning. I smile and cross my arms, leaning my shoulder against the column next to it.

I take my time observing Alice. Her body is exposed on the tall stool, legs wide open. Her breasts are pink and heaving. Hair loose and tempestuous. Eyes dark with need.

“I wonder.” I pinch my chin between my thumb and forefinger. “What would you do, should I untie you?”

“Fucking *take her*,” Dante growls. “We’d pound her to a pulp.”

“Of course.” I roll my eyes, feigning nonchalance, though honestly the idea nearly makes my cock explode right then. “But how? Front? Back? Tail? Cock? All of the above, perhaps?”

Dante rumbles behind a deep sneer.

I tap my chin. “So many options.”

Alice reaches between her legs and I’m there in a flash. I yank her wrist away and hold it up. “Oh, now, did I give you permission for that? I thought you were a good girl. Don’t tell me you’re naughty. Naughty girls get punished, Alice.”

Her lips flatten into a line and she stares me down, lifting her face in defiance. She’s not afraid to challenge me, and she has no idea how deeply that arouses me.

She’s about to find out.

I fist her hair and drag her from her perch. Feet land flat on the floor. I spin her and thrust her forward. Her palms slap loudly on the seat of the stool when she catches herself.

I kick her knees apart and stand aside to give Dante a full view of all her glory. “Is this what you want?”

Dante’s tail whips in a fervor. It darts out, straining to reach her. “Let us have her, Steric.”

Fire burns in my chest. I reach out and smooth my hand between her legs, unfolding her gorgeous pussy down to her deepest center. Her lower back arches and she leans into my touch. “I fucking told you not to come here. I told you she was *mine*.”

Dante howls and the column groans. I glance up briefly, having no doubt the demon would rain Chaos upon our very heads if I push it too far. “Who does she belong to?”

“You!” Dante’s shout rumbles the windows.

“Fucking right, she’s mine.” I free my cock and plunge into her, smashing my balls into her dripping wet pussy.

Finding the Limit

ALICE

ALL OF A SUDDEN I'm full.

Steric presses his fingers into my hips with bruising force, pounding his cock inside my pussy. My eyes roll back in my head and all thoughts are driven straight from my brain.

There's nothing but his thick hard cock.

That and the sound of his body slapping into mine, driving the very breath from my lungs in short little huffs.

"Do you want to come, Alice?" Steric asks.

What kind of question is that?

"Yes!" I scream. "Don't stop!"

Dante's demon eyes are on us. I feel the strength of them. It's so different than before, when we were alone and it was just Steric fucking me. I've never been watched like this and I don't know if it's because it's a demon or maybe I enjoy being watched.

I feel ten times sexier. Power rushes through me. I glance over and Dante is slack-jawed and panting.

It makes me smile.

Steric is about to hammer me right over the edge into oblivion and I'm ready to fall. I'm ready to fucking soar while this demon watches me go.

I grip the stool and the orgasm builds inside me. Each thrust pushes me forward. The second before I plunge over the

edge, Steric pulls out.

I'm stunned and breathless. Aching to soothe that desperate need for release. Too breathless to shout, to even speak.

All I can do is groan. My knees shake and I lean into the stool. Steric scoops his thick forearm beneath my waist and lifts me until only my toes brush the floor.

He kicks the stool within reach of the demon.

Oh, fuck.

"Oh fuck is right, my little minx." Steric places me back on my feet with my ass bared to the demon and holds my hands to the stool. He leans forward and levels his eyes with mine. "Safe word?"

I gulp. "Espresso."

He glances over my head. I can't see the demon. I twist, trying to get a glimpse, but Steric nods once and a streak of pain flames across my ass.

"Naughty girls get punished, Alice. Don't you fucking forget it." Steric nods again.

Dante's tail cracks across my thigh and I jerk. Steric holds my wrists in place. I bend my knees, trying to tug free, but that only puts my ass closer to the demon. Another snap of the tail sends me dancing to the other side.

It stings.

I gush and squeeze my thighs, smearing my own wetness between my legs. I clinch down, hoping for some kind of relief. The only thing I get is another stinging blow.

"Espresso." Steric keeps his eyes set on mine. "All you have to do is say it."

"Fuck you, motherfucker." I grit my teeth. It hurts, but I won't break. My nipples brush against the insides of my arms mixing pleasure with the pain. "Fuck both of you, fucking assholes."

The tail whips up straight between my legs and lands right on my clit. I scream and my knees fold. Steric keeps hold of my wrists.

Now I'm squatting low, knees wide. Utterly exposed.

Three quick snaps land too fast for me to catch my breath.

My eyes are streaming and Steric's face blurs.

Instead of fighting against the sting, I let go. I embrace the heat. Latch on to the fire at my core, lighting up my ass and thighs. It burns me up from the inside out and I ride the line between pain and pleasure.

My head falls back on my shoulders, and I revel in the way my hair tickles my back. The way my ass flames and how Steric's eyes gleam with pride when he looks down at me.

"Who do you belong to, Alice?" Steric asks. I'm so far gone, I honestly can't even tell if he's speaking out loud or just a voice inside my head.

"I'm yours." I gulp back a breath. "Always yours."

A smile flutters across his lips and all I want is for him to tell me I'm a good girl.

But he doesn't.

My belly shakes and a sob rises up through my throat. My legs are open, spreading me as wide as I can go, and there's nothing to stop me from gushing onto the floor. "Steric."

He maintains his grip on my hands but steps around the stool and raises my arms above my head, spinning me around to face Dante.

From this angle the demon looks truly gigantic. The cock it sprouted is thick and bulging. There are ridges and bumps, interspersed with thick veins that writhe up the shaft.

"Take it, Alice. Open your mouth." Steric demands.

There's no time to protest. Not that I want to. I enjoy a good challenge.

The tough flesh fills my mouth and I strain to fit it. My jaw aches with the effort. I lean back against Steric's wide, sturdy thighs and he keeps me upright, wrists locked together, while the demon shoves its cock to the back of my throat.

I gag and choke.

My pussy aches to be touched.

My ass throbs and stings where it rubs against Steric's legs.

I groan as my body protests. Then suddenly the cock shrinks in my mouth before disappearing entirely.

Before I can figure out what happened, Steric's got my wrists wrapped up in one hand. With the other, he grabs my hair and thrusts my head forward.

My face is between Dante's legs and I'm licking my way up the line of a pussy. It tastes like fire and smoke. Like a fine aged whiskey. Dante lashes above me.

The demon's knees bend and I flick my tongue out, finding the clit. There are more layers inside than my own pussy and I run my tongue between each one. It screams and the chiming sound of bells is replaced with the sensation of shattering glass.

Or maybe all my windows just exploded.

Hard to tell.

Something prods between my legs.

The tail.

My lips sting and my mouth turns fuzzy and numb. I keep swirling my tongue slow and steady around the entrance, just the way I usually like to be eaten out. The bulb of the tail returns the favor along my own pussy and we take up a synchronized rhythm together.

Steric releases my wrists and I grab on to Dante's thighs for balance. The tail slips inside me, filling my pussy with its endless length.

It knocks up against my cervix sending a fresh wave of intensity through my body. A familiar ache of cramping begins and then my insides crack and something thin and sturdy slithers even further inside, exploring my deepest inner walls.

Holy fuck.

It's excruciating and I never want it to stop.

Steric kneels behind me now. He tilts my hips and nudges my asshole. I'm so fucking wet and stretched open already he plunges right in.

My head turns heavy. I'm loose and intoxicated with the impossible drug of savage pain mixed with exquisite pleasure.

I dig my nails into Dante's thighs and the demon rocks its opening against my face while Steric fills me from behind.

The thick length of the tail rubs up against my clit in just the right way. The extension inside me continues to unravel, roping and curling over itself, heaving inside my belly. It pours in, stretching me until I'm full and bulging.

Leaden.

I reach up and circle Dante's clit with my thumb while Steric pounds my ass.

I'm so close. I can't find the words. Only the thoughts.

Steric opens me wide from behind. The tail stretches and pools into me in the front.

Please. I beg while I dip my tongue inside Dante's slick musky folds.

"Please what, minx?" Steric reaches around smoothing his palm along my swelling belly and squeezes. It's almost too much. My tongue falters. Dante grabs my head and grinds against my face.

I can't breathe.

I'm filled to the brim. Smothering.

I need to come. I tell Steric silently. *Please let me come.*

Steric slams into me and explodes.

Dante grips my hair and its body ripples along my face, clenching me between its thighs.

The tail goes rigid, then my belly flutters in the same rhythm.

No. Tears run down my face. *I'm almost there. Not yet.*

Steric slips out. The tail loosens and retracts from inside my womb. I squeeze my thighs, trying to hang on, but instead my body only expels the thickness in a hot gush of slick fluid.

I'm hollowed out. Empty and unsatisfied.

"No." My shoulders heave. "Please! Don't stop, yet. I need more."

I collapse against Dante, smashing my cheek against its thigh.

"More what, Alice?" Steric places his hand between my legs, fingers hovering just out of reach. I try to lower myself, but he dodges.

He pushes the hair from the back of my neck and whispers against me. "Tell me what you need, minx."

Sobs wrack my body. My knees give out and hit the floor.

"Expresso." I heave the word out on a cry. "Fucking expresso."

Steric wraps his arms around me and pulls me back. I rest against his chest and my knees fall open, utterly boneless. I look up through my tears and Dante hovers above me. Steric kisses my cheek.

"Good girl." He murmurs. "Take what you want. Take it all, Alice."

Dante thrusts the tail back inside me. The heat and pressure rushes in, all at once, and hits the exact spot I need. My entire body goes rock solid. I strain with the force of the incoming orgasm, and it hits with the power of a nuclear explosion.

Everything turns white.

Then I'm gone.

Masterpiece

STERIC

ALICE UNRAVELS IN MY ARMS.

The pleasure takes over her body. She bucks and writhes, and it's all I can do to ride with her, keeping her from injuring herself as she flails.

Her lower abdomen expands once more, tight and beautifully rounded, while Dante uses the length of the inner tail to pump a stream of cum six feet long into her, coaxing out screams so loud and ragged her voice cracks.

“Enough.” I tell the demon. “I don't want to break her.”

“Glory be, darling.” Dante catches a breath. “It's too late for that. Look at her. She's in a million pieces.”

It takes a moment for the tail to unravel and ease free. When it's out, a warm gush of demon seed spills from her, pooling on the floor with the force of a small river. Alice tenses and shivers, eliciting a small moan as the stream trickles to a stop.

A dash of fear jolts through me. “Was it too much?”

“No.” Dante grins, sagging against the column. The deep crimson fades, leaving the demon's skin a rosy pink. “She's an absolute masterpiece. You're sure she's human?”

“That was your job to discover, wasn't it?” Alice turns limp in my arms. I listen carefully as her heart slows and regains a steady rhythm. My panic begins to subside as her breathing eases.

I bite into my wrist and spread my blood between her legs to help ease the worst of what we've done. It's reckless to give her more so soon, but my guilt is setting in fast.

I should have controlled myself better. I should have been more careful with her. But at least now I know her limits. I'm certain exactly how much she can take.

"Help me with her." I lift my eyes to the demon.

Dante doesn't move. "You'll have to untie us, darling."

"Really?" I'm genuinely shocked.

The demon droops. "Promise you'll never speak of this."

"I'll promise no such thing." I lift Alice in my arms and place her gently in the bed. Her legs splay apart, limp and loose. I admire the way the three of us look all smeared together on her body.

Dante was right, she *is* a masterpiece.

"Can you please take in our handiwork after we're loose?" The demon whines.

"Careful, I have a mind to leave you there." I place my hands on my hips and tilt my head. "Our own little demon artwork on display."

"You wouldn't dare." Dante struggles against the bindings. I cross back to the demon, careful to avoid the slick puddle.

I lean in so our noses nearly touch. "Try me."

Dante snaps and I dodge razor sharp teeth just in time to keep my nose. A laugh oozes out of the demon and creeps across my arms.

I lift my brow. "Monster."

The demon bears its teeth, eyes glinting with dark humor. "No more than you, darling."

Dante takes delight in my insults, just the way Alice does. I'm starting to sense a pattern here. One I don't care to examine too closely. My Demon of Chaos has been at my side for ages, and in less than a day Alice has managed to insert

herself so seamlessly into our little arrangement, my head is spinning.

Fates above! Even her knots are perfect. She's too good to be true and it frightens me. I can't lose her.

Being what I am. Being what she is. I most certainly *will* lose her.

The inevitability forms a knot in my throat tighter than the ones I'm working loose around Dante's wrists.

"What has she done here?" I can't find the end of the thread. Mostly, I want to give the demon a moment to squirm. "I can't quite—"

"Steric!" Dante tugs and strains at the ropes.

I laugh. "I do enjoy watching you struggle."

"You're a cad."

"Fine." I work some space free in one of the knots and things loosen. After a few moments I manage to make enough space for the demon to slip out.

"Finally." Dante rolls out its muscles and flexes while it studies the bindings. "Marvelous. Truly ingenious. And look how much she took! Drained me utterly dry. We're keeping her. That's all there is for it, darling."

"I know." I stride back to the bed to check on Alice. She's still breathing. Heart still steady. "As long as we're careful with her."

Dante scoffs. "Clearly, the vixen can hold her own."

"Still." I smooth my hand across her forehead, down the delicate planes of her cheekbones, and along the elegant sweep of her neck. I've spent so much time over the past few months simply gazing.

It's a relief to finally be able to touch.

Thrilling to know she's mine to keep.

Dante slides into the bathroom and the water turns on, filling the tub. We need to clean Alice, but for now I revel in

the mess we made. Her pleas echo in my mind and my cock rouses again.

Already.

Stars, but I'll never get anything accomplished like this.

Honestly, what difference does it make? There's no reason to do anything but try to satisfy this glorious sex goddess. I would gladly make it my sole purpose to keep her pumped full of my cum.

"Nine circles! Is that the time?" Dante comes back out holding his phone up. "The gala!"

"We're not going." The fucking Rossini gala is the last thing on my mind right now. I run the back of my fingers along Alice's thigh and watch her skin prickle into gooseflesh. I smile at the effect I have on her, even in her dreams.

A sharp blow cracks my skull. I wave off Dante's tail. "Ugh! Put that thing away."

"Dolt. She's ruining you already." Dante pets the tip of his tail thoughtfully. "All the heads of houses are required to be at the event tonight, no choice. Leave her here. We'll look after her."

"Absolutely not." I shake my head. "Fates only know what mischief you hoydens would get up to together. We'll bring her with us. Best keep her close."

Dante's forked tongue darts out, and his eyes darken like the night sky. "Lead her straight into the pit of vipers? As your voice of reason, darling, we can hardly advise that course of action."

"Who better to look after her than us?"

Dante sighs. "Octavian will be there."

I don't like it but there's no time for a perfect plan. "All the better to watch him then."

"Very well." Dante nods. We both stare down at Alice's peaceful form. "We'll have to get our little vixen ready for the ball."

The Catch

ALICE

I STEP out of the bathroom and find Dante working on Steric's bowtie.

They both turn stock still and stare at me. Dante uses the tip of his finger under Steric's chin to snap his mouth shut.

"I feel like Jessica Rabbit."

I twist in the flowing red fabric of the gown Steric had delivered along with his tux. A slit opens all the way up to the top of my hip. The front is a deep vee, revealing most of my chest down to my belly button. Two thin spaghetti straps cross in the back where the gown plunges all the way down to the top of my ass.

"Are you sure I shouldn't wear the black one?" I wobble slightly in the strappy gold heels that lace up my calves with narrow satin ribbons. Normally I can handle a sexy heel pretty well, but they activate recently used parts of my core that are still tender.

Steric took time to clean me and take care of the worst of the welts with more of his blood.

A slight haze surrounds my memories of the past few hours, like that distant feeling of a dream. Except, I know it was real. Every move I make tells me it was, but honestly, getting double-teamed by a demon and a vampire probably isn't common enough to feel real anyway, right?

Now it's just getting awkward. "Are you going to say anything or just stand there?"

“Ravishing.” Steric waves Dante’s hand away. “Don’t change a thing, my minx. You’re positively stunning.”

He comes over and spins me in a little pirouette. The gown flares just right and I feel like an absolute goddess.

I touch the loose waves of my strategically messy bun. “I should have gotten a blowout.”

“Didn’t you, though?” Dante winks.

“It’s perfect. No reason you should hide any of this.” Steric draws his finger up my bare chest, trailing along the line of my neck. He curves his palm around the base of my skull and thumbs the place where my pulse throbs.

The dress is light and airy and barely there, but I feel stripped entirely under his gaze. He’s seen every part of me today. He knows what I look like in the most intimate ways. Messy and completely uninhibited. More than I’ve ever shown anyone.

He pushed me to my breaking point and instead of feeling shattered, I’m stronger than ever. I got railed by a demon and a vampire, and I’m still here.

Now I understand how much I can take. I know the incredible things my body can handle.

I can endure so much more than I ever imagined.

It’s hard to believe that a mere few hours ago, I was only wishing for him to fuck me on his desk. The day turned out so much better.

I smile and lean into Steric’s touch. Every movement I make rouses used places within me I didn’t even know could be touched. It reminds me of where he’s been, of where I’d like him to return for further exploration.

I step forward into the sturdy frame of Steric’s tight body. His knee wedges in between my legs. The tux is sleek and fitted perfectly to outline every inch of his bulging—

“Nope.” Dante’s tail lashes between us. The demon lassos Steric away. “Settle down you two, or we’ll never get out of here.”

“I see no problem with that.” Steric’s voice is low and rumbling. His mood has shifted from sensual to dangerous since I’ve been getting ready.

“Tom is already waiting.” Dante wraps up the bowtie and adjusts it to perfection. “We must arrive fashionably late, not tardy.”

“If you insist.” Steric steps away and offers his elbow to me. “Shall we?”

I curl my fingers around his thick forearm and follow him out to the waiting limo.

It’s not his usual town car, but a stretch limo tonight. A long seat covers the length of one side with a mini-bar across from it. Champagne waits, chilling in a silver bucket of ice when I slide in.

Steric takes his spot beside me and Dante sits in the seat along the rear of the cabin.

“Good evening, Mr. Crawford,” Tom glances back at us through the rearview mirror. “Ms. Alice. Sir.”

“Hi, Tom.” I smile and waggle my fingers. Dante salutes.

Tom has to be wondering why we’re all at my place, but I know for a fact he makes enough money that he won’t ask questions.

“Rossini gala tonight?” Tom confirms.

“Yes, thank you. Let us know when we’re nearly there.” Steric raises the privacy partition and turns on some pleasant classical music.

He pours me a glass of champagne, then hands one to Dante. His arm rests along the length of the bench behind me and he pinches the freshly shaven corners of his chin between his forefinger and thumb.

“Alice, you recall when I said my world was dangerous?” Steric’s tone is serious. “That I kept you at a distance because I wished to protect you?”

“Yes.” The bubbles of the champagne float in the back of my throat and tickle the inside of my nose. My heart pounds. I was never aware of my heart rate as much as I have been today.

Ever since Steric drank from me, it’s like I can feel my own blood zipping through my veins, and through his. A quiet hum in perfect sync.

“It’s important for you to know what this event tonight means for you now that things have... *progressed* between us.” Steric’s thumb finds the back of my neck and tingles run down my spine as he feathers his touch along the fine hairs there.

“All right.” I glance over at Dante who observes us carefully.

I take another sip of champagne to steel myself for whatever’s coming. Steric looks as serious as he does in the boardroom whenever he’s about to announce a hostile takeover.

“The gala isn’t a benefit to raise money for blood cancer research. It never has been. The tickets aren’t coveted and unavailable merely because of the price.” Steric glances over at Dante. “They’re impossible to obtain because those attending aren’t mortals. It’s the annual gathering of the vampire houses. A night of revelry, yes, but also of negotiations for territory, approval for number of donors, and confirmation of new inductees... as well as the option to declare a mating.”

“Mating?” I glance up at Steric then. His eyes shimmer like polished onyx.

“Heads of houses like I am are allowed to take mates. Humans they form a blood bond with. A free exchange of blood and power.” His hand curls around my neck, with his middle finger rubbing along the sensitive spot where he’s already taken from me. “If I declare you as my mate, Alice, you’ll be my partner in every way. No other creature in this city will be able to lay a hand or anything else on you.”

It sounded incredible. To be able to spend every day like today, sharing Steric's body. Fucking and tasting him to my heart's delight. It was too good to be true.

"What's the catch?" I ask.

Steric's finger stills at my neck.

Dante leans forward, "The catch, vixen, is death or madness. No human has ever benefited from mating with a vampire in the long term. Should Steric come to an end, you'll end with him. Should he endure, you'll lose your mind to the blood madness. There will come a point when you can't take enough. Can't give enough. No matter how careful you are. A mating is for life, and life never ends well for the mortal."

"The choice must be yours, Alice." Steric's voice is so low I wouldn't even know he was speaking aloud if not for his lips moving next to mine. "Stay in the limo. I'll go to the gala and Dante will escort you to safety. You'll be taken care of for the rest of your life. Somewhere warm, where I can imagine the sun glowing upon your face."

He smiles, but his eyes are filled with misery and regret. It cuts deep inside me. "I'll never see you again?"

"Never." Steric studies me like he's trying to burn my face into his memory. "But you'll be safe. It's for the best."

"For the best." A knot rises in my throat and it strangles my words. I shake my head slowly, then quicker. "Fuck that."

Steric stills.

"If it's a matter of losing my mind alone on a beach missing you, or losing my mind in your arms, wrapped around your cock with your teeth in my neck, then I don't see how there *is* a choice." I curl my fingers into the front of his shirt. "You're not getting rid of me that easily."

"We fucking knew it." Dante bursts out a laugh. "Didn't we tell you, darling?"

Steric melts into the seat. "Alice, you don't know—"

"You said it was my choice." I throw back the last of the champagne.

I turn to Steric and smooth my hands around the curve of his collar, threading my fingers through his silky black hair. I ease my leg across his thigh and seat myself in his lap, arching my breasts up toward his mouth.

He's already solid, stretching the fabric of his trousers between my legs.

"I choose you. Plain and simple." I stare into his eyes and lay it out. "I'm going to walk into that gala with your mark on my chest and your cum dripping down my thighs, so every vampire in this city knows I'm yours."

The taste of power he's already given me rushes through my veins. Maybe it's making me feel stronger than I should. Maybe it's not his power at all, but mine. Steric belongs just as much to me now as I do him.

His lips part. His hand grips my ass, keeping me balanced as the limo slows.

Tom's voice cuts in through the intercom. "Nearly there, sir."

Steric's eyes don't leave mine. He reaches over and presses the button. "Take a few turns around the block, Tom. We're going to need another minute."

Irrevocably Yours

ALICE

STERIC GAZES UP AT ME, jaw loose and eyelids heavy.
“You’re sure?”

“If you think I’m walking away from you after today, you’re the one who’s going mad.” I open his trousers and pull out his cock like it’s my fucking birthday and he’s brought the gift no one else can compete with.

“Alice,” Steric’s voice is shredded. His hips pump, while his fingers grip the edge of the plush leather seat. “I don’t want to lose you. I can’t.”

“You will. No matter what.” I curl my fist around his shaft and spread the moisture over his tip with my thumb. “Why not get as much as we can from each other first? I’d rather spend a hundred days like this than a thousand alone.”

“The vixen does make an excellent point, darling.” Dante kneels behind us and swoops the skirt of my gown up and out of the way. “No need to wrinkle, is there?”

Steric’s head falls back on the seat while I stroke. I’m burning with need, but I have to know this is what he wants, too. His throat bobs and he exhales a deep moan that travels straight down between my legs.

“Steric,” I whisper, not sure how much longer I can hold back. “Please.”

“Agh! Yes, Alice.” His palms close around my face and he’s there right in front of me and I’m drowning in that glowing gaze. “Fuck all and Fates be damned. You’ll walk in

there dripping with me, but it won't be because you're mine. It'll be because I'm yours. Irrevocably. Now wrap that sweet pussy around my cock and make me fill you up."

I didn't bother with any kind of underwear. I knew better.

I fit his head into my opening. He thrusts up and I sink down and he's in me.

All the way.

All at once.

My head falls back and his face presses into the line of my neck. I cradle him to me while I roll my hips, taking him as far as I can, working that deepest spot that hits just right. It's still tender from earlier, despite the blood he gave me to help ease the soreness.

The cool air of the cabin hits my ass, whispering against the places Dante struck me that are healed over now, but the memory is still near enough to remind me of how sensitive it still is.

"That's it, darlings." Dante murmurs behind us. "Beautiful."

I want it to last, but there's no time. Steric trails his mouth down my neck, across my chest to the swell of my breast.

"Do it." I clench around him, take him in that much further. *Almost there.* I pull the strap of my gown aside offering my breast. "Fill me. Drink me."

"Alice." My name leaves him in a strangled rush.

He jams his cock into me and he's exploding. Teeth pierce the top of my breast. My heart stutters and he gushes into me, filling me at the same time he swallows me down.

My body sings.

I ride the ebb and flow. Heavy. Light. Full. Empty.

It's perfect. Dazzling. Glorious. Magnetic.

Dante's hand cups my mouth and I pull a shout up from the deepest part of me and smash it into its palm.

“Again, darling. Give it all to her.” The demon purrs in my ear. “Good girl. Fuck him, vixen. Take it one more time.”

Steric’s face crumples against my chest. He lunges into me, wetting my chest with fresh crimson tears. One second he’s turning soft, and just when I think he’s finished, he throbs hard again.

Another jerk of his hips and he grinds me down again. My body entwines around him, walls lock him tight inside me, swallowing everything he gives. He unleashes. I’m filled to the brim.

We hold there for a few moments. Eternity? I can’t tell anymore. We’re locked together in a haze of magic and heady rapture. Stuck solid in an exchange of power that I can’t put words to, only feeling.

Dante deftly swoops in with a linen napkin and covers the spot along my entrance where we’re joined together. Steric twitches one last time and collapses. Color floods his face. His lips are bright red with my blood, both inside and out.

Dante scoops an arm around my waist and helps me up off Steric’s cock without spilling across the front of his black pants. “Nicely done, vixen. Nearly there.”

The demon passes off the handkerchief to me and I keep my hand pressed tightly between my legs while it tucks and tidies up Steric. I’m limp and heavy. My head swims with the motion of the limo.

“Alice?” Steric cups my face.

What have we done? His voice whispers inside my head, like a radio signal that isn’t tuned quite right. *Mistake... .*

The limo eases to a slow crawl. We’re in the drop off line. Up ahead spotlights sweep into the night sky at either side of the entrance to the most coveted party in town.

“What do you mean?” My words come out lightly slurred and drunk. My tongue is thick and too heavy.

Steric rakes his bottom lip across his tooth and presses his face to mine. I suck his lip into my mouth and drink from him.

Little aftershocks of orgasm flutter through my body and I moan.

He pulls away. Steric sweeps his shiny kohl black hair out of his face. The cut is already healed. He carefully avoids my gaze.

On the other side of the tinted window, a gaggle of press and paparazzi line the entire length of the red carpet. The swath of red leads up to the massive marble steps of the Rossini museum like a river of blood.

My body soars from heavy to light. Dante splashes champagne on a fresh napkin to mop most of the evidence of our exchange from my mouth and my chest. The teeth marks remain, two neat little dots beginning to bruise in a crescent at the top of my breast.

I curl my free hand around Steric's bicep for balance.

He still won't look at me. Tom eases the limo into place at the entrance.

Dante scoops the strap of the gown up over my shoulder, carefully draping the bodice to hide the bite from the hundreds of lenses that'll be trained on us in the next three seconds.

There's no time to sober up. No time to give up to panic.

We're here. This is it.

The attendant opens the door. Shouts erupt.

Steric steps out into the sea of chaos. Dante makes a strange laughing sound behind me. Of course a Demon of Chaos would love a moment like this.

Steric's hand is there, waiting for me.

I fold the napkin and clench my thighs and ass as tight as I can and take his hand. He helps me out and I slip the linen napkin deftly into his front pocket and flash a smile.

Dante steps out behind us, whacking Steric on the back, still giggling. The shouts from the photographers turn into sharp whistles and screams of "Over here!" and "This way Steric!"

Flashes blind me.

Steric looks down at me, and positively smolders. His hand crushes mine so hard it hurts.

My nipples pebble with the pain and thrill of it all. Everyone can see the pert outline against the thin silk of my gown. The clear evidence of how instantly my body responds to Steric's touch.

I lift my chin and grip his arm, using his sturdy frame to keep myself upright. "Let's go, boss."

Steric's eyes glimmer. He darts his tongue out across his lower lip and bites back a knowing smile.

Before I can think too hard about anything else, we're moving.

Steric steps forward and we make our way up the red carpet together. Gravity takes over. I let my belly go soft and keep my thighs pressed together while his cum slips out of me, slick and fresh, slathering my legs with every step I take.

What's In A Name?

STERIC

ALICE IS COATED in my cum. It's all I can do to make it up the press line without parting her gown and declaring to the world that she's mine.

And I am hers.

I fear we've made a terrible mistake rushing into this. A proper mating requires careful planning and preparation. Alice hardly knows what she's about to be thrust into. I've never partaken in a pairing before, with good reason. Others like Octavian garner a new mate once every century if they manage to last that long.

Most don't.

Fates help us if the other Heads of houses sense how far I would go to keep Alice safe. They will see our attachment only as weakness. As a vulnerability. A liability that must be exploited.

In the world of vampires power is a fluid thing. When it ebbs from one, it flows to another. I may be the most powerful Head now but Octavian was once, and he's standing in the wings, ready to flow right back in to snatch the top spot as soon as the moment presents itself.

I must not allow him the opportunity.

We near the end of the press gauntlet and I slip my arm around Alice's waist, drawing her close.

I slide my lips along the gentle shell of her ear and hide my words from the cameras.

“Whatever happens tonight, it’s imperative you do not leave my side.” A strange feeling settles in my chest. A heavy, expanding pressure where there has existed only hollow emptiness for a millennium.

“You’ll obey my every command without question or hesitation.” I squeeze her waist. “Swear to me. Smile and nod.”

She follows my order. The cameras must be convinced. I hear her silent vow even though she doesn’t speak it aloud.

I’m not going anywhere, boss.

“That’s my good girl.” I smile softly, and press my mouth to the edge of her hairline. “Every pair of eyes will be on us tonight. Now drop your gaze and laugh like I’ve told you a most sinful little secret.”

My sweet Alice puts on a most impeccable performance. I bring her hand up and dust a brief kiss to her knuckles. Dante catches my gaze across the top of her head and nods in approval. She is certainly a treasure.

We’re about to dive into vampire infested territory with a most scrumptious little treat. It’ll be nothing less than a miracle if we all come through the night in one piece.

Alice curls her hands around my left arm and Dante takes position at my right, one step behind as we prepare to enter the gala and declare a war. The demon vibrates with the energy of Chaos, completely in its element. There will be other creatures in attendance this evening besides vampires.

Shifters, witches, demons, sorcerers, all have different rankings and dealings amongst our kind. No doubt a few hunters or priests will try to find a way past our wards as well. They will most certainly fail.

I guide Alice up the wide swath of steps leading up to the magnificent entrance of the Rossini Museum, a neutral location that befits the ruse we’ve set up to deceive the general public of our fair city.

I bend near to Alice. “What’s your full name, my minx?”

“Why?”

“For the wards.” I lift my chin towards the entrance. “I must invite you in.”

“Oh, so that goes both ways, huh?” She smiles. It’s a little lopsided and her pupils are slightly overlarge. She leans heavily on my arm teetering on her narrow heels.

I shouldn’t have taken so much blood from her today, but it was so rich and intoxicating, I couldn’t help myself.

“I’m Alice Catherine Monroe Van Halpern.”

I hesitate.

Dante collides with my shoulder. A strange grinding sensation churns inside my chest.

“Van Halpern?” I echo.

Dante swoops in. “Is that of Germanic origin?”

“How should I know? It’s an old family name.” Alice shrugs and continues forward. It’s all I can manage to follow. “Not technically a name, I guess. A title. My dad’s a baron or whatever. Doesn’t matter. My parents didn’t even include it on my birth certificate.”

The beguiling aftertaste of her blood turns to bitterness in my mouth, as I recognize the intoxicating quality for what it truly is; the forbidden taste of a long sworn enemy.

An explosion drives up into my throat, bursting out through the tips of my fingers.

I clench my teeth as it hits again.

Again.

I ride out the sensation until the pressure eases into a regular rhythm.

Alice slips free from my grasp and moves ahead, staring up at the painted dome that decorates the entryway.

“You’re looking flushed.” Dante takes my elbow and keeps me upright. “Stay calm, darling.”

My eyes water from the sudden pulsing ache. “How can I?”

“You must.” Dante hisses. “A hunter’s daughter? *The Hunter’s* direct progeny? They’ll destroy you right along with her, should they suspect. And I’ll likely be sucked into the vortex along with you both, innocent though I may be.”

“*Innocent?*” I tug at the bowtie around my throat, suddenly burning. I hiss into his ear, “You had *one* job.”

We enter the ornate vestibule where the coat check and security line forms when the museum is open for patrons.

Tonight, only two guards wait at the door. Thick neck and chest muscles flex against burgeoning suits. They’re burly and menacing even in their human forms but I know what they truly are because I hired them.

Cerberus.

The most powerful guard dogs in the supernatural realm.

They’re trained and instructed to rip any non-magical being to shreds where they stand. No one without supernatural power in their blood can enter this place, unless given an explicit invitation.

Before I can make the declaration and invite her in, Alice approaches the guards, head held high.

The Cerberus nostrils twitch as they sniff her out.

I grip Dante’s arm, prepared to leap in and yank her out of the way, but instead of attacking, the guards do something they’ve never done for any mortal before.

They open the doors and allow Alice Catherine Monroe Van Halpern to waltz right in, cutting through the crowd of creatures in those golden stilettos the same way her deception slices through my freshly beating heart.

A Dangerous Game

ALICE

STERIC WASN'T WRONG. From the moment I set foot in the Great Hall my skin prickles and all attention lands on me.

I'm suddenly surrounded by a myriad of glittering jewel-toned eyes. Hundreds of vampires and other beings turn still as statues and catalogue my entrance. The bite on my chest pulses, and a drip of Steric slips free, making its way slowly down the inside of my thigh.

Oh, shit.

Steric's hand clamps around my shoulder, so tight it feels like it might dissolve into dust if I try to move.

His voice is a tight, low snarl in my ear. Heated and dangerous. "This way, minx. Keep your eyes down and don't make a fucking sound."

Okay, but seriously. *What the fuck.*

Heat radiates from him, and there's a sudden pounding in my ears. I glance up and his jaw is screwed tight and ticking as he drags me through the quickly parting crowd.

As we move through, and bodies part, they also bow or dip in curtsies. All of them lower their heads and eyes, no one looks directly at Steric. A quiet murmuring sound follows us and I pick out the words "my lord" and "your grace."

Even the waiters dressed in sleek silver waistcoats pause with their sparkling trays of crystal flutes filled with thick garnet liquid.

A sour burning rises in my throat.

My eyes water, though I'm not sure if it's because of shock or the bruising strength of Steric's grip on my arm.

We make it through the wide open space of the Great Hall and Steric drags me down a narrow side gallery. As we go, the number of vampires dwindle to nothing until we emerge into an empty medieval exhibit.

On a dais under a spotlight sits an enormous round table, fashioned out of rough heavy wood with thick iron bolts decorating the edge. A spotlight illuminates the center and gleaming suits of armor stand in a line behind it.

Steric lets go and I collide with the edge of the thick wood right beneath my diaphragm. The air rushes out of my lungs in a harsh burst and I feel like I might break in half.

“What the—” Before I can turn around, Steric is there.

His hand closes around my throat and this time he's not careful to leave space for air. He spins me and presses his body into mine, thrusting my lower back into the solid wood, bending me backward until only the very tips of my toes brush the floor.

“What game are you playing, Alice?” He hisses my name through his sharp teeth and flecks of venom spray my cheek.

There's no air to form words. My vision blurs. I claw at his hand, but his grip is just as solid as the ancient table at my back.

I'm not playing. I writhe, trying to free myself, but my feet only dangle. Gray spots float and burst in my vision. *I don't know what you mean. Please. Espresso. Espresso!*

Steric releases me so suddenly, I flop down to the floor like a rag doll. My knees hit the marble, jarring my entire body. I lean forward, palms pressed against the cold unforgiving floor, heaving for air.

He paces over to Dante who guards the door with a grim, otherworldly stare that makes my skin crawl. I remember the sting of the tail on my bare flesh, and that it was only playing.

How bad would it hurt if it was delivering a true punishment?

But for what?

“Steric, what’s wrong?” I gasp. “I don’t understand. Will you at least look at me?”

“I must applaud you for being so convincing with your little... seduction.” Steric finally turns around.

Slowly.

He gazes down on me and darkness surrounds him like a thunderhead. My body quivers. “You had me fooled, and that’s not easy to do, minx. Or shall I call you by your true name, Van Halpern?”

I gape. “This is about my name?”

“Name?” Steric’s dark brows arch high. “Oh, no, you wretched hoyden. It’s about your deception. Your little ruse. Your family. Your blood. What you fucking *are*.”

I glance back to Dante, hoping for the slightest clue. The demon merely crosses its arms over its chest and turns a darker shade of crimson.

“I’m not anything.” I plant my foot on the floor and start to stand.

Steric is there in a flash, finger pointed in my face. Voice heated with deadly force. “No. You will not dare stand before me, huntress.”

I stare up at him. He’s calling me huntress, but I feel much more like prey. That predator is back, the one who stalked across my kitchen island and took blood from my body to feed the monster pacing there just under his skin.

Not only did I let him, I fucking enjoyed it.

The bite on my chest aches, even as my pussy clenches over open air, hungry to be stuffed full again. I tuck my lower lip between my teeth to keep from moaning.

Steric stands only a step away, but it feels like a thousand miles. The distance between us is like a chasm. I don’t know

what happened, but the moment we walked through that door something changed.

“What is it you think I did?” I square my shoulders and breathe through the shooting pain in my knees. Fighting the desperate desire pooling between my legs. “Spell it out for me, since I’m clearly such a stupid fucking human.”

“Human.” The word twists out of Steric’s mouth like a serpent. “You’re barely more human than I am.”

It hits like a slap, even though he didn’t even touch me.

Mistake. I hear the echo of his thoughts from the limo. I don’t know what this day was, but it’s clear he was just using me and now he’s done.

He tried to tell me. He tried to get me to stay in the limo and I should have listened. Normally, I’m good at reading him. We slay together in the boardroom, and I thought this was the same.

Clearly I’m way in over my head, and I realized it too late.

Dumbass.

Hot tears sear my eyes. I suck in a breath and swallow them back. I won’t let him see me cry.

Dante’s eyes flicker and the demon’s gaze rises from a blank spot on the floor up to my face. “Darling—”

Steric raises a hand and the demon snaps its mouth shut.

“Are you satisfied?” Steric grips the opening of his shirt and yanks. Two of the buttons clatter to the floor. He exposes the smooth planes of his chest. “It worked. My heart beats. For the first time in a thousand years, I’m alive. And it’s all your bloody fault. What was the rest of the plan? How were you going to finish me off?”

Steric leans down, offering himself to me. His voice is quiet and venomous. “Were you going to let them do it? Those monsters out there? Or were you planning to claim the honor for yourself?”

My eyelashes flutter and a tear splashes on my face. It rolls down my cheek and lands on my chest, stinging the open wound.

I still have no idea what he's talking about, but I do know one thing for sure. Whatever happened between us today isn't going away that easily. I stare up at him, into his glowing eyes and grit my teeth.

"You're mine, vampire." I curse my chin for wavering. Curse my voice for turning thick and soft with emotion. "All mine."

A raw groan tears out of his throat. Then he's fisting my hair and raking my mouth against his. He sweeps his tongue inside, devouring me. My lip catches on his tooth and I bleed into him.

He shudders and I catch my balance on his shoulders, curling my fingers into the lapels of his tux. His cock rages against my stomach and my belly flutters.

Even now I want him. In spite of his anger. Because of it.

What the hell is wrong with me?

I moan into his mouth and tangle my hands in the thick satin of his hair. I bite down on his lip as hard as I can and take from him. My body soars. My heart stutters in my chest.

Beneath my palm, his skin heats, and his heart matches the skipping, trilling rhythm of my own.

Steric yanks away suddenly. For a split second I see something there, he's wavering on the edge and a softness cuts through the hard stone of his gaze.

Minx. I hear it loud and clear in my mind. I hold my breath and lean into him.

Then it's gone. That resolve is back, and it's immovable. Impassable. Darkness enters his gaze and there's no light left.

He shoves me back.

I slap him as hard as I can, hoping for one last chance to knock some sense into him. His head snaps to the side and my

arm rings with pain.

“I don’t know what the fuck you think I did, but I’ve never once lied to you.” I swallow hard and the tears well up. “You’ve seen more of me than anyone else ever has, just in this one day. I trusted you. I gave all of myself to you. I’m not the one who betrayed us. That’s on you, boss.”

I rise slowly on shaking knees.

I can’t find the use in trying to persuade him any further. He’s clearly not in a place to believe the truth. And I sure as fuck won’t stand here and beg for him to keep me.

At least if I go now, I might be able to leave here with my life. A narrow hall leads off the exhibition and ends in a door with a glowing red EXIT sign over it.

I grip the edge of the table until I’m steady. “I’m going to walk out that door now and you can go ahead and do whatever it is you do in your secret vampire world. You won’t *ever* see me again.”

I glance back at Dante and the demon gives a solemn nod.

This is the right choice. Even if everything raging inside my body is telling me not to make it. I force myself to turn and walk away.

I don’t dare look back.

With the heady taste of Steric’s blood still swirling across my tongue, I push through the door and exit out into the cool, quiet alley that runs the length of the museum.

The door shuts with a hard and final slam behind me.

I don’t know which way to go. I’m not sure it matters.

I lean against the stucco wall of the museum and take off my heels. There’s no telling what kind of disgusting and dangerous things litter the damp pavement of the alley, but I don’t care.

Everything is numb, and all I want to do is put as much distance between myself and Steric as I can, as quickly as possible. I turn and head toward the road that leads along the

back of the museum, just in case there are any lingering photographers still out front.

A rat skitters across the pavement in front of me and I startle. My knees are still shaking and a nasty creeping sensation takes over. All I want is to get home. Climb into my bath. Wash this entire day down the drain.

It's only about a mile to the riverfront where my condo is. The journey won't be great in bare feet, but it would be worse in these heels.

Right as I reach Spring Street, there's a loud roar of an engine and the short screech of tires behind me. I jump onto the sidewalk, dodging out of the driveway as an unmarked van jerks to a stop, barely missing my body.

It happens fast.

Before I can blink the door slides open. A black hood goes over my head. A heavy fist drives into my stomach and I crumple forward. A sharp prick stings my neck and fire sears my veins.

Then nothing.

The Council

STERIC

ALICE GOES.

Like an utter fool, I let her.

The door clangs shut with the force of an iron cage clamping around my chest. If she'd screamed and railed it would have been easier. If she'd fought it would have given me cause to—

What?

I shudder. What would I have done to her had she remained? Slowly, the blood in my veins turns from hot to positively boiling.

Van Halpern.

“Fates be damned!” I shout. My fist crunches and pain reverberates up my arm as I pound the unforgiving floor. “Unless...”

“Darling—” The demon starts in but I'm off the floor in a flash and up against Dante, seething.

I burn.

Everything inside me is on fire. “I only want one word out of your mouth, yes or no. Did you plan this chaos?”

The demon vibrates against my body. A rich curling laugh creeps out of its throat. I know it well enough to understand it's a mixture of excitement and nervousness.

Dante's throat bobs. “No.”

I study its eyes as it blinks with that preternatural gaze. The demon may be capable of causing great chaos wherever it goes, but lying is not in its nature. Just because it didn't plan it, doesn't mean it won't enjoy a good bit of mayhem when it occurs.

My grip eases.

"It must have been centuries in the making. You know we prefer to think in the moment, darling." It shivers as the excitement overtakes the nerves. The laugh grows into a rolling thunder. "Incredible! Your worst enemy. Fucking with you now. After all this time. Even in death. Do you think that shrew had this in mind? Ambrose Van Halpern's last hurrah?"

I adjust my gaping shirt. I can't stop trembling. Can't stop burning. "Does it matter? It's over. She's gone."

"Over?" Dante presses a hand to my chest. "You have a living beating heart now, darling. You think they won't hear it?"

I swallow back a sudden gag. My pulse jumps in my neck. Instinctively, I cover it with my palm.

The demon sucks its pointed teeth. "So how do we get you out of here in one piece? That's the real question."

"Damn her!" I fist my hair with both hands, bending double. "Damn *you*! How could you overlook this?"

"Perhaps they'll be accommodating?" Dante shrugs weakly. "There's always a first for everything, non?"

"Not this. Never this." My rage sends venom oozing from my teeth, sour and stinging. Or perhaps it's the bitter taste of fear I haven't felt in centuries. Not since the moment I put the pieces of that obstinate hunter in the cold hard ground.

According to our agreement amongst the Vampire Council, I've unwittingly committed the worst kind of treachery. No vampire has ever united with a hunter.

Ambrose Van Halpern was a relentless human-vampire half-breed, with only one purpose in mind: destroy all vampires.

Specifically, me.

If power between vampires ebbs and flows, the force of a union between a vampire and hunter would be a tsunami.

The consequences of this day and my impetuosity sink in and my newly beating heart shudders. I grip my chest and wince. Not only have I put myself and my best friend in danger, but Alice as well.

No, she put herself in danger. It was her choice. Always her choice.

She came to work for me.

Chose to insert herself into my existence.

I run the events through my mind trying to parse through these last few months since she entered my life.

The undeniable allure, the intoxicating effects of her blood, her strength and ability to recover so quickly, the knots... ye, gods—

“The knots! Who else but a hunter could tie up a demon so it couldn’t get loose? It all makes sense,” I grumble. “How did we not see it?”

Dante’s tongue slips out and the demon hitches a shoulder. “Deception is easiest when one is deceiving one’s self, is it not?”

I step back, knees weak. “You believe she truly is innocent in all this?”

“What better way to protect a secret than to not tell a soul?” Dante shrugs. “Especially the secret you’re protecting.”

“But, the way she tied you. She’s had practice. She’s been trained. But by whom?” My eyes throb and I clamp my fingers across the bridge of my nose.

Living is clearly not for the weak.

Everything in my body feels different. Whether it was premeditated or not, Alice has changed me in more ways than I thought possible.

I need time to process.

Time to plan.

A series of raps sound on the door.

“Time’s up, darling.” Dante removes my bowtie and opens the top button of my shirt to make it look like it’s meant to be open. “Look smart.”

I dig deep within myself, remembering how to breathe. It’s been so long since my body has ceased its normal functioning that I feel everything as if it’s for the first time.

It’s a riot of sensations.

Somehow I have to pretend this sack of meat and bones I find myself in isn’t teeming with fresh life.

In a room full of vampires.

Dante reaches up and grips the back of my neck. “It’s been a good run. We’ll do what we can.”

I press a kiss to the demon’s forehead. “My friend.”

Fates be kind.

I step around the table, facing the door with the suits of armor to my back. I just got my life back and in a matter of minutes, it may be over.

Once and for all.

I brace my hands flat on the table and nod to Dante. The demon opens the door and the Heads of Houses file in for our annual Council.

The only thing I can think of is Alice. Despite how she’s ruined me. Despite whatever subterfuge may have occurred. I can only think of her taste, her body, her strength and determination.

My sweet minx.

I can’t say I regret this day, even if it has gone so terribly wrong. If there was anyone worth dying a second time for, it must be her.

What a way to go.

The Council enters and Octavian saunters in last with a smug grin upon his narrow rat-like countenance. His bulbous, watery eyes fix on me and he nods.

The other three Heads file around the table and take their places. Helena is cool and distant as usual, but fixes a shrewd gaze on me. We took each other as lovers many centuries ago. Of those around this table, she is my closest ally.

At a mere three-hundred years, Gregory is the youngest. He's furtive and eager as usual; merely pleased to have a spot at the table, but ready to prove himself. Nothing to lose and everything to gain. A dangerous combination.

Caitriona's red painted mouth curls up on one edge. Her eyes rake over my body, and land pointedly on the center of my chest.

She's a protégée of Octavian's and one of his sires. He's made her ruthless. The art of subtlety is not on her list of talents.

My skin rises to gooseflesh. Something is amiss, other than the thunderous thrumming of my own heart. I grit my teeth trying to quell it into submission.

The door remains open and Dante checks the hall.

Octavian steps up to take his place across from me.

"Where is your mate?" I ask. It's customary for all mates to have a place in the room.

"As it happens, I'm on the hunt for a new one." The dark, satisfied look Octavian settles on me sends a writhing chill down my spine. He makes a point of searching behind the suits of armor, turning a wide circle to examine the corners of the room. "And where is yours?"

A bitter sting sears my throat. Is it possible for a heart to beat right out of a chest? I suppose I'm about to find out.

Dante locks eyes with me. A flurry of emotion flickers through the demon's astute gaze. Chaos swirls around us in a torrent, the demon can sense it much better than I can.

I circle my gaze around the faces at the table. Even after all she's done, I feel the need to protect Alice rather than offer her up to these monsters. "I haven't taken a mate."

"Oh, dear. My eyesight must be failing in my advanced age. I'm certain I saw you enter with a candidate. Was there not a little sign upon her chest that said, 'Drink me'?" Octavian twists his mouth into a vainglorious little pout. "Couldn't manage to hang onto her? They do get cold feet so easily. It takes quite a firm hand to retain a mate these days."

The edges of my vision darken. My palms break out in a thin sheen of perspiration.

"They must be broken in. Like a horse." Octavian cracks his knuckles. "If she were here, I could show you how. Pity you let her slip through your fingers. I suppose you never had the heart for it."

Hunt. Heart.

The words clang in my ears like dissonant bells.

My stomach cramps suddenly, as though I've been kicked. A sharp sting at my neck sends lightning through my veins. I lean forward into the table with a grunt, but keep my eyes on my nemesis.

"This was your doing. That henchman you sent to the parking garage. You knew what she was this whole time." Red edges into my vision and my sights narrow in on the wicked creature across from me.

"Of course I did." Octavian smirks. "And you were well behind the mark, as per usual."

Dante shouts. I launch myself across the table.

The door bangs open and creatures flood in.

Chaos erupts.

Octavian hovers above me with a triumphant grin.

Gregory yanks me up by my shirt and plants a fist in my face. My nose crunches and I see stars. Blood fills my mouth and pours down my front.

Somewhere in the midst of it all Octavian turns and strides calmly toward the EXIT sign.

Toward Alice.

Call Me Master

ALICE

MY BODY ISN'T WORKING the way it's supposed to.

Everything is... fuzzy. My tongue feels thick in my mouth and when I tell my arms and legs to move, they don't obey.

My head rocks loosely against a hard surface, knocking back and forth along the floor beneath me.

Not a floor. The van.

It all comes back in a haze.

The hood is still over my head. I can't see. Can't breathe. I'm trapped in a body that won't move. Panic sets in.

That sting. I've been drugged.

I fight to stay calm.

What's the number one rule from Murder Podcast Academy 101? Never let yourself be taken to a second location.

Well, too fucking late for that.

I need to focus.

The road hums beneath my cheek, vibrating against my temple. We hit a pothole and it jars my head but I still can't make my body do anything.

"She still out?" A gruff voice says.

A heavy boot nudges my side. "Looks like it."

“Mm.” There’s a heavy inhalation, the sound of smacking lips. “Smells tasty.”

My throat stings. Rough ropes dig tightly into my wrists and my arms ache with the strain of being bound at the small of my back.

All I know is, I’m on my own. The way I left things with Steric, he won’t be coming after me. If he even realizes I’m gone.

“Dare you to take a bite.” A rough chuckle escapes one of my captors.

No, nononono.

“Too late, we’re here.”

There’s no telling where *here* is, or how long I was out. The van slows and my stomach lurches. There’s a loud mechanical whirr like electric gears grinding.

A garage door?

“Maybe we’ll get the leftovers.” Boots step over me and the back door of the van opens. Thick hands with cold, sandpaper grip wrap around my bare ankles and jerk me out.

The mechanical noise sounds again and all I can think is this might be my only chance. I thrust out with my feet as hard as I can, and... nothing.

I barely nudge my heels into a pudgy stomach.

“Oh, ho, lookie who’s up.” The same rough hands hoist me out of the van.

“Holy fuckballs. For real? I gave her enough to take out a T-Rex.”

The world tumbles around me and I’m upside down, ass over tits. A shoulder digs into my pelvis and we’re in motion.

I cough and gag as my stomach rebels.

A heavy hand lands on my ass. “Behave girlie.”

All I can do is moan and fight the burn of sour champagne and stomach acid as it rises up my throat into my nose.

Somewhere along the way gravity takes hold and the hood slips to the ground.

The two guys don't even notice.

Strands of hair dangle in my face, but from what I can see we're inside a dark paneled hallway. There's plush Aubusson carpet running underneath the heavy work boots carrying me along.

We go up a long flight of stairs with an elegantly carved banister. Each step makes me sicker until I throw up again. This time I don't even try to hold back.

My stomach is relatively empty, but it's enough to spill down the back of my captor's leg.

In an instant, I'm falling. The floor rushes up to smash my shoulder and my head cracks in a flash of yellow light. The only thing that even remotely breaks my fall is the velvety carpet on the top landing.

"What the fuck man—"

"She fucking puked on me!"

The two men hover over me dressed in beige coveralls. They look like they could work for any kind of generic utility company.

One's large with a goatee, or at least like he's trying for a goatee. It's patchy and thin, definitely not working for him.

The thinner one is peering down at me with his head quirked to the side. For a second, my vision blurs and there are four heads swimming above me.

"She okay?" The thin one says.

"She'd fucking better be." The big one smacks the thinner one. "I thought you said that shit would work."

"It did." He gestures. "I mean, mostly. She was supposed to be out longer."

"Whatever." The big one checks his coveralls. "Gross. Grab her other arm."

They each grab me beneath an armpit and drag me up the hallway. My feet are useless and I can't do anything with my head other than shut my eyes and hope I can get off this ride soon.

A door opens and we enter a room with an ornate but cold fireplace. The only light is what drifts in from the hallway. "Where should we put her?"

"Dunno. He just wanted her tied up."

Seriously? Fucking goons.

I'm embarrassed I'm making this so easy for them, but whatever they gave me still has my brain disconnected from my muscles somehow. I can't make anything work.

"Well, she's tied up." My feet leave the ground and I land on a bed with a thick duvet and a forest green canopy overhead.

At least it's soft.

"Just gonna leave her like that?" Hands grab me and roll me over. "Come on man, presentation is everything."

The thin guy fluffs the pillows up behind my head and arranges me on my back. My hands are still tied beneath me, but he clears the hair out of my face and combs it out across my shoulders.

Then he grabs my legs and arranges them straight out in front of me and drapes the gown out in a fan.

"Dumbass." The big guy scoffs and heads out.

The thin guy glances over his shoulder and the second his pal's back is turned, he locks eyes with me.

Oh, shit.

His hand trails up my leg along the high split in the gown, all the way up to my inner thigh that's still coated with Steric's dried cum.

The piece of shit sucks in a long breath and grins at me.

My heart is working just fine, apparently, because it's about to beat right out of my throat.

There's nothing I can do. He drapes the gown wide open, exposing my center.

"No panties, huh?" He licks his lips and that's when I notice the fangs. "What I wouldn't give for a taste of that sweet, sweet—"

Oh, no. Oh, fuck.

"Thank you, Tyler." A voice slithers out of the darkness in the corner. "That will be quite enough from you."

Icy fear shoots through my veins.

Tyler's cheeks tinge bright red and he backs up, keeping his eyes on the corner until he makes it across the room.

He leaves me like that, bound and exposed with the cool air swirling over my bare center.

The door shuts, leaving me in pitch darkness with this creeper I can't even see. There's a distinct sound of a heavy lock sliding home.

Footsteps cross the room. A match strikes and a flame catches in the fireplace. The warm light illuminates the outline of a sharp face. The man stands once the fire spreads.

He turns and his gaze lands on me, traveling toward my center. He smiles. It makes me want to scream.

My throat doesn't work, but finally my legs do. I squeeze my thighs shut. He licks his lips.

There's a flash of fangs as he continues easing toward me.

"Hello, Alice." He removes his tuxedo jacket and rolls up his crisp white sleeves inch-by-inch. "My name is Octavian. But you may call me, master."

Sacrifice

STERIC

IT'S UTTER MAYHEM.

I throw Gregory off and scramble for purchase on the floor. Dante shouts and holds off attackers from the doorway, but the demon can only do so much.

Caitriona sinks her fangs into my ankle. Helena pounces on her with a shriek. I tear free, but my leg is shredded.

“Dante!” I shout for my second-in-command. “Out!”

The demon appears at my side and snaps Gregory's neck with its tail when the lesser vampire tries for me again. I don't wait to see what becomes of the little traitor.

I limp down the hall toward the exit and before I'm halfway down, Dante scoops an arm around me and helps me the rest of the way out. We burst out into the darkness, and the alley is too quiet.

No sign of Alice other than her faint scent in the air.

My heart clenches.

I fall forward, resting my hands on my thighs, gasping for air. My lungs aren't used to working at all, let alone working this hard to provide oxygen to the rest of my body.

Dante examines my shredded calf and lets out a low whistle. “Can't run like that, darling.”

“Piggyback?” I ask.

The demon shuts its eyes. “So undignified.”

“He has Alice!” My rage mixes with the night air and comes out in a small cloud.

“Right.” Dante jerks its chin. “Hop on. But if you tell anyone—”

“I know, I know.” I grab on and shut my eyes as the demon takes off. The wind whips my hair, car horns blare, and after a few moments of quiet we jerk to a halt outside the city.

Octavian’s sprawling stone manor house sits glowing on a swath of wide green lawn behind a twelve foot wall. We stand across the road staring through the iron filigreed gates.

His wards are firmly in place at the edge of his property. The air vibrates with the energy of his metaphysical forcefield protection. The only way to break them is with a massive blast of power.

I pace back and forth in the road just at the edge, and the hairs on my arms rise the closer I stand to the invisible wall.

“How do you suppose...” I start to formulate a plan, but Dante holds up a palm, urging for my silence.

“Never mind that, darling.” The demon catches its breath. “We can get you in, but you’ll be on your own afterward.”

My heart catches. “You mean—”

“A trip back home for us.” Dante winks. “We’ve had a good run. Eh, love?”

“But, can you return?” I grip Dante’s shoulder. I’m not ready for this moment, despite all the centuries we’ve shared together.

“If there’s anyone powerful enough to bring us back? You’ll find them, darling. We’re not what matters tonight.” Dante scoops a palm around my neck. The tail snakes up my side and I squirm as it tickles my ribs. “Alice needs you.”

“Careful, or you might fool me into thinking you care.” I nod and press a long kiss to the demon’s mouth. I cling tightly, and it pries my fingers loose from its shirt.

Dante grins. “You know that’s not possible for us, darling.”

“Safe journey.” I pat it on the shoulder, keeping a stiff chin. “And tha—”

“If you dare thank us, darling, we’ll claw our way out of the Inferno just to kill you again.” Dante flicks its tongue and winks. I snap my jaw shut as the demon swivels on a heel and makes its way across the road.

Dante takes a stance in front of the gate and holds up its hands. The air chills immediately and a hissing, slithering voice rises up out of the darkness.

I shiver.

The gate frosts with ice and the iron begins to pop and crack as it turns brittle.

An enormous burst of energy explodes outward. I shield my eyes and drop to the ground from the force. When I look again, the gate lies crumpled in a mess of twisted, frozen metal.

Only a glittering haze remains where my friend stood.

It happens so quickly, I don’t have the time to process. The demon is simply gone. I swipe tears of blood from my wrist and clear the knot from my throat.

There will be time to feel the fullness of its absence later. Right now, I have to focus on finding Alice.

I step through the opening in the gate, unhindered by the wards. Up at the house, men come running. There’s a spray of gunfire, but my leg is healed enough now that I can get a decent amount of speed going.

While Octavian’s henchmen are vampires armed with guns, they’re still no match for my speed and fighting experience. They’re all too new to be effective.

I tear through them, savoring the chill of their flesh as I rip out their cold dead hearts and smash them on the gravel beneath my feet. What’s left of their bodies melt and burst into flame.

One hits me with a spray of bullets, but my body ejects them with barely a sting. I grab him by the throat and squeeze.

His flesh squishes through my fingers and I let him drop on the doorstep.

All I can think of is Octavian's hands on Alice. How I betrayed her. For whatever reason, it's clear now that Van Halpern engineered this. He was the one to blame for keeping secrets from his own progeny.

Just another mark against his filthy black soul.

I step inside the house and dodge more henchmen. Two rush me wearing beige coveralls. I take the large one first, grabbing a candelabra from a side table in the entryway and thrusting it up into his thick gut, then twist and yank.

It's enough to disable him while I deal with the second one. The thin one's spine snaps like celery as I rip it from his body. I leave it in a heap and go back to the first.

He's got a gun aimed at me and unleashes his whole clip, which I dodge easily enough. The fear in his eyes is more than appetizing, but I have no desire to take blood from this scum.

Probably tastes like raw sewage.

All I want is Alice.

I step on the henchman's wrist and enjoy the crunch his bones make beneath my foot. "Where is she?"

"Agh!" He writhes on the floor, blood and guts oozing from his stomach. Tears leak down his face. "Upstairs! She's upstairs with the master. Th-third door on the left. P-please don't—"

I tear his head off and toss it aside.

More men run out from a side hall. My bloodlust kicks in and with a roar, I set out to do everything it takes to get back what's mine.

Now or Never

ALICE

"I'M ASSURED you'll be well compliant." The vampire slides his palms across the duvet on either side of my legs. He locks his gaze onto mine. "Though I do promise, should you choose to fight, you'll only be hurting yourself."

Fear winds and twists its way up out of my gut and exits my mouth in a deep moan.

"Very good." He smiles.

Ugh. He thinks I'm into this?

Maybe it's terror pushing adrenaline through my veins or maybe it's just the drugs wearing off, but more of my body comes to life.

I curl my toes and they obey. I flex my wrists and find the knot in the rope. It's a basic square knot. I thank Tyler for being a moron even if he is a perv.

"I think you'll come to find I'm a gracious master." Octavian watches me. "Follow my rules and we'll have nothing to worry about. Yes?"

I make a small non-committal noise. It's too soon for him to know I can move yet. As much as I hate it, I need him closer.

"I'll give you a choice." He reaches out a long, knobby finger. "Where shall I draw from you first, thigh, wrist, or neck?"

None of the fucking above.

He raises a dark brow. His hair is clipped short with little tendrils curled down along his forehead. It reminds me of one of those Roman emperors.

“Easy or difficult.” He shrugs. “Entirely your choice, morsel. Though...” He runs his hand along my inner thigh. My skin crawls. “My dear Steric has left quite a mess here, hasn’t he? I don’t do sloppy seconds.”

“Too late for that.” I can’t stop myself. “It’s all you’re getting.”

“Ah! She does have a tongue.” He edges up onto the bed, straddling my hips. He takes my chin in his hand and digs his fingertips into my face. “And it’s a sharp one. You’ll learn to control it. Or I will. Impertinence will only cause you pain.”

I gnash my teeth and try to pull away but he only digs in deeper. He forces his gaze on me and his mouth flattens in concentration.

A vein bulges out across his forehead and his eyes bug out.

Then he shoves my face away and barks out a shout. “His hold on you is stronger than I thought. But it’s not too late. I’ll make you mine, huntress.”

“Yeah, I definitely can’t wait for that. Except...” I manage to keep enough sarcasm out of my voice to make him pause. Clearly this dude’s got an ego and I need more time. I need to keep him talking. “I think you have the wrong person? I’m not a huntress. I’m an executive assistant.”

“Just because it was easy to deceive that imbecile Steric doesn’t mean I shall be fooled so readily.” He presses his hands down on my shoulders, pushing me back into the pillows. “I know exactly what you are.”

“Can you explain it to me then?” I try for my best look of earnestness and stare him straight in the eye while I work the knot free behind my back. “Because I seriously don’t know what’s going on here. Why am I such a tasty little juicebox for you vampires?”

“By Jove. You honestly don’t know.” He stares down at me and the vein recedes slightly from his forehead.

I give my head a slight shake. I just need to keep him talking for a few more seconds until I can get the knot loose. “I didn’t even know vampires existed for real until this morning.”

“Mm hmm.” He erupts in this creepy villainous laugh and if he had a mustache he’d probably be twirling it. The sound is so cliché I want to roll my eyes. “Van Halpern. That scoundrel. Of course he thought he’d be protecting you by taking his secret to the grave.”

“What secret?” My parents definitely never said anything about vampires in our family history.

“Your blood.” He licks his lips and circles his fingertip around the bite Steric left on my chest. It’s mostly healed over now, but still tender. “Bred out of a human-vampire union, your ancestor was the first hunter. The first half-breed. Possessing the power to withstand Vampiric seduction and control, but also with the ability to give them back life, or some semblance of it. A heartbeat. Walking unencumbered in daylight.”

The more he talks the more his eyes glow. A sliver of venom oozes from his fang and drips onto his lower lip. It’s gruesome and I try to sink further into the bed just to get more distance between us.

His voice turns low and he leans in. “A vampire with a huntress for a mate is virtually unstoppable.”

In a blink, he’s biting me.

Hot pain sears my neck.

It’s the complete opposite of Steric’s bite. Sharp and ripping. Messy.

My ears ring from the raw agony shooting through my body.

His hips grind into me and his cock digs into my belly. At least I can be glad he has his clothes on.

After the first stunning wave of pain flows through, I slam back into myself. Everything gets clear. My thoughts slow and

I can think again.

Wrists. I need to get free.

I work the knot loose with my thumb and wiggle out of the poorly tied rope. Hysteria sets in and I want to laugh, it's so easy.

The vampire slurps noisily as his mouth works along my neck. Each draw he takes stings like fire. It makes my heart stutter. Where Steric was slow and careful, this jackass is fast and harsh.

He doesn't give a shit about me. I'm just a means to an end.

The numbness is coming back too quickly.

Now or never, Alice.

Octavian lifts up. My blood is smeared all over his mouth and darkens the crevices of his sharp teeth. I want to throw up again.

He circles his tongue around his lips and swipes it out over his chin. "No wonder he wanted you all for himself. I've heard hunters were tasty, but I've never had the pleasure, until now. Before the sun rises, you'll belong to me."

He lunges again, but I yank my arm out and thrust the heel of my hand up under his chin. "No. I fucking won't."

His head snaps back with a crack. I shove at his chest and thrust him backward. It's enough for me to slip my legs free and jam my heel straight into his groin.

He curls up on the bed, and I run for the door.

Too late, I remember it's locked.

Fuck that bastard, Tyler!

A cold laugh drifts up from the center of the bed. "I was beginning to think this wouldn't be any fun. There's nowhere to go, but please, do give chase all you like, canary. I shall very much enjoy being the cat who catches you."

My neck and shoulder throb. I can hardly move my left arm at all. The front of my dress is soaked with my blood. I'm feeling heavier by the second. The more I move, the faster I'm going to bleed out.

"Shit!" I scan the room for anything that could be useful.

A shadow stretches from the bed to the door and Octavian is just, *there*. Right in front of me. Before I can even blink.

His palm slams on the door beside my head. "Run."

I duck under his arm and the only explanation I have is that he lets me. He's too fast. Too strong. Which means, I have to be smart.

He's also enjoying the chase. I'm just giving him what he wants. But I can't bring myself to make it easy. I'll fight until the last beat of my heart if I have to.

In the darkness I trip over a chair and fall to the floor.

He's there again, but I roll. He yanks my hair. I tug free.

I grab the chair and hold it out like he's a vicious lion, and I'm the hapless human trying to tame him.

Somewhere in the distance, rapid pops explode, like firecrackers.

Octavian turns to listen. I swing the chair as hard as I can up against the stone edge of the fireplace.

One of the legs splinters off. We both dive.

He's on top of me. Those beady black eyes bug out of his head.

Blood and venom ooze out of his gaping mouth. "Little bi ___"

There's a fizzling sound and blackness creeps up from the center of his chest where the chair leg plunges into his heart. His own weight and momentum drag him the rest of the way onto it.

Slowly, he disintegrates around my hand.

Black, ashy sludge drips down my wrist and glops onto my bare chest.

I roll to the side and heave what's left of him off onto the floor, then shield my eyes just in time to block out the flash of fire that consumes the rest of him.

I rest on the floor, panting for a moment before I gather the strength to sit up. A few more breaths help me get to my feet.

The lock on the door is old-fashioned. I dig around in my hair for a loose bobby pin and twist it open to make quick work of the latch.

The hall is quiet, but further into the house I hear shouting.

I jump and slap my hand over my mouth to keep from screaming when more loud bangs happen closer and I realize it's not firecrackers, but gunfire.

I edge down the stairwell, careful to peer behind me and down the stairs to make sure no one's coming.

There's the heavy sound of a fist meeting flesh and a body drops. I grip the banister and curl my toes into the silky carpet, ready to spring out and run.

Footsteps pound up the stairs and I lunge.

We tumble back down the stairs, landing at the bottom in a heap. The world sways and spins around me like one of those rides at a fair. I groan, trying to gather my bearings.

"Alice?" Soft hands curl under my neck and brush the tangled, blood soaked hair out of my face. I groan and crack open one eye to find familiar glowing eyes swimming above me with concern etched across the scrunched up eyebrows. "What did that son of a bitch do to you? I'll fucking end him."

"I already did." I mumble and try to sit up. Steric helps me. He's covered in just as much blood as I am. I pick off a small chunk of flesh clinging to his shirt and fling it aside.

"You... what?" He checks me over and makes note of my injuries. I rest my forehead against his and shut my eyes again, simply relieved to be back in his arms.

“Ended that asshole Octavian.” Now the adrenaline is wearing off, my body starts to shake and the shock of everything that just happened worms its way in.

“I killed them all.” Steric closes his arms around me. His soft lips land on my temple and work a careful line down the edge of my jaw. “I tore them all to pieces just to get to you.”

I smile a little and look up at him. “You were gonna rescue me?”

“Clearly you’re doing fine on your own,” he takes my face in his hands and traces his thumb over my lip, “Huntress.”

I lean into his touch. “I’m still mad at you, boss.”

“How can I possibly earn your forgiveness?” His lips feather across mine. Teasing. Tempting.

“Mm. I have a few ideas...”

“Tell me.” He closes his mouth on mine and I savor the warmth of his tongue tracing along mine. I open to him and he thrusts in deeper. My tongue catches on his tooth and our flavors mingle as we drink from each other.

I pull back just enough to catch a breath and a glimpse of the hunger in his eyes. “I’d rather show you.”

He groans and lifts me up in his arms. I rest my head on his shoulder as he carries me down the main hallway, stepping over body parts, feet squelching through thick pools of blood soaking into the carpet.

The front door hangs askew on its hinges and the first light of morning casts a patch along the floor in the entryway.

Steric pauses at the edge of it. I glance up at him.

“It’s okay. It can’t hurt you now.” I kiss his strong jaw. “You’re mine.”

“All yours.” His chest expands in a deep breath, and he steps forward, carrying me into the warmth of the golden sunrise.

Here Comes The Sun

A FEW DAYS LATER...

The first rays of sunlight edge over the horizon and my eyes tear up, but I can't look away. I don't think I'll ever get used to this.

The cerulean water of the Mediterranean Sea stretches out unhindered before me, calm and clear. It's everything I never thought I could have in my life of darkness.

"You know, just because you can look directly at the sunrise now, doesn't mean you should." Alice joins me on the solar deck of our yacht. She places a steaming earthenware mug on the table beside me. Then she curls up in the crook of my arm. "It'll ruin your eyes."

I glance over at her and little white dots float across my vision before they fade. "I haven't turned *entirely*, you know."

She sips her own coffee. "Human enough."

"Hmph." I keep my arm around her but reach forward to take my cup. I've discovered in the past few days exactly why humans rave over coffee. I dip my nose slightly forward and inhale the rich aroma before I take my first sip of the morning.

Utter euphoria.

Alice watches. Then she squints at me. "How come you never moan for me like that?"

"You're not coffee." I kiss the very tip of her nose and smile sweetly.

My little minx does appreciate a good challenge. My heart pumps blood downward and my cock twitches in anticipation, tenting my white linen pants.

She indulges in another long, slow sip. Her eyes drift shut, and her face turns slack with pleasure. “Mm. Yeah, you’re right. Coffee is way better than fucking you.”

“I—” I drop my jaw and stare at her until a wide smile breaks over her face that’s infinitely more breathtaking than the dawning sun before us. “Harridan.”

Her giggle bubbles up inside my chest, warming me from the inside out. She puts down her coffee and trades it for the bottle of sunscreen nearby. She takes a generous amount and I sit up so she can settle behind me and rub the lotion into my back and shoulders, massaging as she goes.

I drop my head and allow my eyes to slip shut while I enjoy her ministrations. I don’t know what our future will bring us, but for now I’m perfectly content to savor this.

All I need is Alice.

Her touch, her voice, her—tongue. I shiver under the growing heat of the sun when she licks that soft spot behind my ear. Her silk robe drapes open and her breasts press into my shoulders.

Her hands move down my biceps, down over the dark hair across my forearms. I tilt my head to give her access to my neck and jawline.

“You know, one thing I still haven’t figured out is how you tied Dante so well.” A pang touches me when I think about my friend, but I’m certain the demon is causing all sorts of ruckus in the Inferno. If anywhere has Chaos enough to satisfy its nature, then it must be Hell. “If you didn’t know you were a huntress. How were you able to do it?”

Alice pauses for only a second. “A gal has to have *some* secrets.”

I clamp down on her wrist before she can reach for my cock. I turn and yank her down to the couch. I lower my voice. “Not from me.”

She gazes up at me. Her pupils pool deep and black, expanding with arousal. Her pink tongue darts out across her bottom lip. Her pulse races under my fingertips.

“No secrets between us, little minx.” I slide my hand down between her legs. She’s already thick with dampness.

Already? No, always.

She never stops being wet for me, and I can’t get enough of her body. “Nothing at all should ever be between us. Not even air.”

Now she bites down on her lip and her hips take up a slow rise and fall beneath my hand. I indulge her for a moment before I pull away and bring my fingertip to my mouth to taste her.

“Well?” I dip my middle finger into my mouth and suck her off. A pretty blush blossoms on her cheeks.

“Ugh. Okay, fine.” She covers her face with her hands. “It’s not as interesting as you think, though.”

“Tell me.” I draw my index finger along the width of my tongue.

She raises a brow. “Touch me.”

I shake my head. “If I do, you won’t be able to speak.”

I take up my coffee again and cross my ankle over my opposite knee. Alice tucks her bare foot in my lap and draws her arch along my shaft. I squirm, aching for self-control, and keep my gaze forward on the pristine blue of the sea.

“Fine.” She sits up and rests her chin on my shoulder. “My dad was a diplomat until I was twelve. I had a personal protection officer from the time I was born who trained me how to take care of myself if I ever got abducted. Knots, picking locks, self defense, all of it. I didn’t think I’d actually need any of it after my dad retired, but I guess it came in handy didn’t it?”

“Alice.” I stare into my coffee. “To which country was your father engaged as a diplomat?”

“Different ones. He wasn’t really allowed to talk about it, but he went to Germany and Austria a lot, even Hungary, and he spent a lot of time in the Carpa—thian Mountains....”

“And...” I watch as realization softens her features, “there it is.”

“Holy shit.” She stares at me. “I’m gonna strangle my parents. They fucking knew. They *knew!*”

“I’d like to strangle them myself for lying to you.” I wrap my arm around her waist and draw her into my lap. “But at least they had you trained well. I’m grateful for that.”

She rests her forehead on my shoulder and I brush the hair off her neck. Her thin blue lifeline calls to me from just beneath her fair skin. “Yeah, and if they’d told me the truth about vampires, we’d probably be enemies right now instead of—”

I growl at the thought. I can’t even allow her to finish the sentence. Instead, I sink my teeth into her delicate flesh and draw a taste of her into my mouth, allowing her essence to drift across my tongue while she grinds her center along the strength of my cock.

“Mm.” Alice delights in my ministrations.

I lave my tongue over the punctures allowing my venom to mingle with her own power to close the wounds. I move my mouth to hers and run my lip over my sharp incisor.

Alice takes from me and we kiss long and hard, building up an insatiable fervor before I turn and lay her out on the couch again. I break away, savoring the way she pants for me.

Her wet center glistens in the morning sunlight and she traces her finger along the edge of her florid opening.

It’s more than tempting to simply plunge in and rail her until her screams echo across the water, but it’s only morning and we have plenty of daylight left.

There’s no reason to rush.

I grasp the string of my pants and pull. The waist falls down around my hips and I smooth my palms down along the

muscles pointing like an arrow to the apex of my thighs.

Alice squirms and dips her fingers inside herself.

I reach into my pants and take my cock, giving it a few pumps while it tents out the linen, leaving a damp spot of pre-cum that moistens the fabric.

Alice is lovely and flushed. Her chest is pink and her nipples peak into tasty little nubs that I can't wait to suck on.

"Do you want to come?" I grasp my balls and tug while I stroke myself with my other hand.

"Yes." She drags her palm upward, adding pressure to her clit.

My face turns hot with need. "Do you want me to come?"

She nods.

"Where?" My hips judder in my hand. I'm so close. Just watching her touch herself is enough to do me in.

"Everywhere." She groans. Her eyes lock on mine and my hand pauses mid-stroke. "I want you to fill me up from the inside out, boss. Come in every hole I have. Then paint my entire body with your cum. I want you completely drained. And then you're gonna do it all over again, every single day for eternity."

My knees sag as a burn tears up the base of my spine and I grit my teeth, holding back before I can get inside her. I take a few deep breaths and drop my pants.

"I'd guess you better wrap that filthy mouth around my cock then, little minx." I step forward and she sits up, but I shove her back down.

I turn around and angle my hips over her face while I bend forward and grab her hips, bringing her pussy to my mouth. She catches on quickly and then her lips swirl down around my shaft.

It's easier to hold off on my own release when I focus on what I'm doing to her. I rake my tongue over her seam in long licks, dipping and swirling before moving back to her smaller

entrance. I circle my tongue around her puckered flesh and tighten my grip around her thighs, holding her steady while I devour her in earnest.

“Yes, that’s my good girl.” I groan. “Don’t stop.”

I’m covered in her slickness and it’s glorious. Her palm massages my balls, tugging and holding me back from my release. I pump my hips into her mouth at the same time she grips my face between her thighs.

My cock hits the back of her narrow throat and her throat flexes. I pause, allowing her the space to breathe. She hums around my shaft and the vibration in her throat sends my eyes back into my skull.

Her fingers are still damp and slick from when she was touching herself and she circles around the tight flesh of my ass before dipping inside.

I yank my face away with a raw shout. She grabs my shaft and tugs me into her mouth and swallows.

I double down and nip at her clit with my teeth while I shove three fingers into her hot, tight pussy.

She finds the nub of my prostate and circles. I drag her face against my mouth and shout into her while I unleash myself down her throat.

Her thighs freeze around my face, then her walls flutter and clench around my fingers. I don’t wait to ride it out.

I curl my arm around her thigh and bite. Her sweet, spicy blood gushes into my mouth. Her heart pumps with the power of her orgasm and I drink her down.

I pull out of her mouth and she lets out a mindless groan. My cum smears across her chin and she’s so fucking gorgeous, I don’t even wait to shove my cock into her again.

“Yes!” She burrows into the cushion and lifts her knees, allowing me to access the deepest parts of her. I pound into her, relentless and unyielding. “Fuck me, Steric. Don’t ever stop.”

I heave out another load, filling her up. She spills out around the edges as her muscles flex and jitter again.

I dive immediately into her ass and she stretches and fights the intrusion. “Alice?”

She rakes her nails down my chest, marking me with long red streaks. “I said I want all of you. I meant it.”

Alice pushes out and my cock sinks in. She grips me, strangles me, and I’m utterly hers.

“Wanton.” I grit my teeth and pound into her. Her breasts move with the strength of my thrusts. She takes all of it. She takes all of me. Her forehead screws up in concentration.

When I hesitate, she digs her heels in deeper. It’s almost too much. I don’t know how I can possibly give any more. I cry out and keep thundering into her. The noise of our slick bodies matches the lapping of the water against the hull of the ship.

Alice tilts her head back, arching her lower back and meets me stroke for stroke. I gather her up in my arms, lifting her to my chest. She rides me while I circle my thumb over her clit and take her breast into my mouth.

I bite down and drink from her again. She moans and slows her pace while she feeds me. I slide in even deeper and her stomach flutters against my ribbed abdomen.

She whimpers and fists my hair, raking her nails across my scalp. I make her come again, and the waves of her release draw mine out as well.

“Good job.” She murmurs against my temple. “You’re so close. You can do this.”

I lean into her, my body ready to collapse. She soothes my back and kisses down the line of my neck, scraping her teeth along my shoulder.

She clamps down, hard and I buck my hips.

“Mm. That’s it.” She licks the place she marked and lifts her hips, pulling off of my shaft. My cum leaks out and she

reaches down to catch it with her hand. “Just a little more, boss.”

“Alice.” I moan and roll my forehead against her shoulder. “Please.”

“Hey.” She jerks my hair and lifts my head, staring me in the eyes. “You know the safe word. Please, what?”

I don’t know that I have any more to give, but I want so badly to please her. I want to see her covered in me.

“Please.” I swallow and lick my dry, parched lips. “Please make me cum on you.”

Her face erupts into a grin and it’s all I need. She offers her neck and I bite. Her blood courses through me, giving me extra strength to see this through to the finish.

She strokes my shaft, using the mixture of our own bodies to ignite me. I massage her neck to keep her blood flowing, then run my hand roughly through the length of her hair, tugging her head back. I stroke her hair again and again while I drive my cock into her.

“Yes, Steric. You’re so strong. So good. Fuck me.” Alice continues the quiet litany as she pumps my shaft. “That’s it. Let it go. You’re all mine.”

One last draw from her and the sting builds to unbearable strength. I pull back and we watch together as the ropes of my cum paint her tanned stomach and heaving breasts.

We stay like that, rocking together while we catch our breath, watching as the pearlescent fluid paints her body.

Alice kisses me, and I hold her close. I love the feel of her sun-baked skin when it’s slick and coated with me. She pets my hair and swirls circles across my back. Then she presses her lips to the shell of my ear and I melt under her touch.

She smiles and whispers, “That’s my good little boss vampire.”

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to those of you who helped make this book possible. You know who you are, but don't worry, your smut-loving secrets are safe with me.

Most of all, dear Reader: I'd like to thank YOU for reading this book. You make everything worth it.

If you enjoyed this book please help your fellow smut lovers find it by sending them a message, leaving a review, or posting about it on social media. It really makes a huge difference!

About the Author

Kate McDarris loves writing dark fantasy fiction. The spicier the better!

When she's not writing, she enjoys spending time outdoors, and taking road trips.

Her favorite things are rainy days and the morally grey characters who match them.

She's always happy to connect with readers!

Feel free to get in touch via Twitter or Instagram, and [click here](#) or visit <https://katemcdarris.com/> to sign up for Kate's author newsletter to stay up to date on new releases and steamy bonus content!



Tropes | Kinks | Triggers

ONE READER'S yuck may be another reader's yum, and my strongest desire is for readers to have fun and feel safe while they're in the world of Boss Vamp, so I've done my best to research lists of common content found within dark, spicy, fantasy romance.

If there is something I've missed that you feel should be included or if you have questions about specific details, please don't hesitate to email me: authorkatemcdarris@gmail.com.

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ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

ALPHA MALE

ANAL

ASSAULT

BATHTUB SEX

BEING WATCHED/OBSERVED DURING INTERCOURSE

BILLIONAIRE

BITING/TEETH/FANGS

BLOOD/DRINKING

BONDAGE/RESTRAINT

BREAK UP TO SAVE HER

CONTROL/LOSS OF CONTROL

DEMON
DESPERATION
DIRTY TALK
FINGERING/FISTING
FROTTAGE/OUTERCOURSE
GENDER FLUIDITY
“GOOD GIRL/GOOD VAMPIRE”
GORE/DECAPITATION
GUNS/GUNFIRE/SHOOTING
HAND NECKLACE/CHOKING
HURT/COMFORT
KIDNAPPING
LINGERIE/PANTIES
MAGIC
MARATHON/MULTIPLE ORGASM
MASTURBATION
MÉNAGE/MFM
“MINE/YOURS”
MURDER
OFFICE ROMANCE
ORAL
ORGASM DENIAL
OWNERSHIP/CLAIMING/MARKING
PLEASURE/ORAL WHILE STANDING UP
POWER PLAY
SPANKING/WHIPPING
STRONG FEMALE
RIMMING

ROUGH SEX

TAILS

VAMPIRE

VIOLENCE